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Diego Tristan
Sepp Blatter
Robert Pires
Luis Figo
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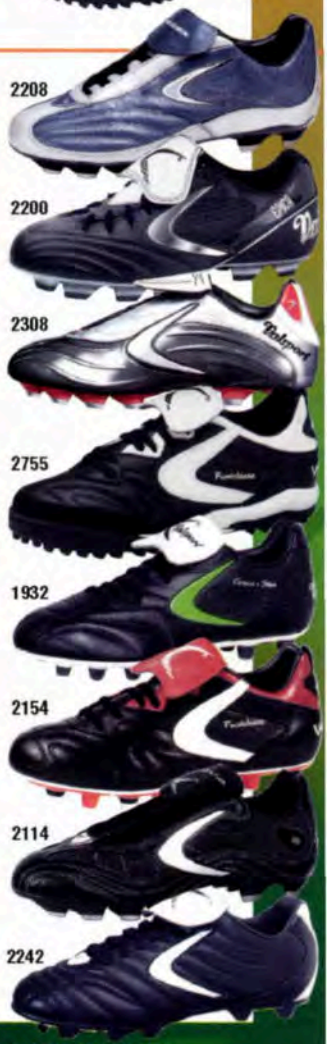

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February 2002

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Figo takes FIFA prize
Luis Figo was the surprise winner at the FIFA Player of the Year gala in Zurich. *Page* 4

Blatter launches re-election bid
The vote is five months away, but Sepp Blatter is already campaigning to be re-elected FIFA president. *Page* 30

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WORLD SOCCER is occasionally accused of being too Euro-centric. It is not a charge over which I lose much sleep. Europe, whether we like it or not, is where the power and the glory lie in the modern game. Argentina may start as favourites to win the 2002 World Cup, but their squad is likely to feature just one home-based player. For Africans and South Americans, European football is a necessary evil – the stage which their players and coaches must grace to be lauded and rewarded.

Europe may call the shots for most of the year, but over the next month all eyes will be on Africa. The 23rd Nations Cup is being staged in Mali, one of the world's poorest countries – a reminder to the wealthy clubs of western Europe that, though they might try to bully their African players into staying away, football often triumphs in adversity.

There is nobody better to preview the tournament than Mark Gleeson, Africa's leading football writer, who has been a fixture in the pages of *World Soccer* since the mid-1980s. Mark's 10-page preview starts on page 12.

The Nations Cup will give us our best opportunity yet to assess the African challenge for this summer's World Cup in Asia. But the expert analysis of all 32 finalists is already well under way with the publication of the first of our Essential Guide booklets, presented to you free with this issue.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)

● 03/12/01...Ronald Koeman leaves Vitesse Arnhem to become the new coach of Ajax following the sacking of Co Adriaanse

● 04/12/01...Filippo Inzaghi, scorer of Milan's opening goal in the 3-2 win over Chievo, could be out for up to three months with damaged knee ligaments

● 05/12/01...Roma are held to a goalless draw by Liverpool in their Champions League second group stage match at the Stadio Olimpico

● 06/12/01...Arsenal confirm that Arsene Wenger has agreed a new contract to stay as coach until 2005

Figo takes the FIFA prize

Gavin Hamilton reports from Zurich on a surprise winner of the FIFA World Player award

LUIS FIGO of Portugal and Real Madrid was acclaimed FIFA's World Footballer of the Year at a star-studded gala in Zurich in the week before Christmas. But Michael Owen, *World Soccer's* World Player of the Year and the newly-crowned European Footballer of the Year, finished only eighth in the vote organised by world football's governing body.

Figo finished just ahead of David Beckham in the poll of 130 national coaches. Although Beckham received more first preference votes than Figo (30 to 27), the Portuguese star edged ahead with more second preferences (35 to Beckham's 23).

Figo's Real Madrid team-mate Raul, the original favourite, finished third, with the previous year's winner, Zinedine Zidane, in fourth place.

Owen added the *Ballon d'Or* to his *World Soccer* award when it was announced that he was *France Football's* 2001 European Footballer of the Year.

In the poll of the magazine's European correspondents, Owen was the clear winner ahead of Raul, with Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn third. Figo, seventh in the *World Soccer* vote, finished sixth in the voting for the *Ballon d'Or*.

It was a surprise to many that Figo even made the final shortlist of three for the FIFA award. But he received his prize from FIFA president Sepp Blatter with good grace.

"This is perfect," he said. "After winning the Spanish championship and qualifying for the World Cup, now this."

Figo was quick to pay tribute to his Real Madrid team-mates. "I played in a team which made it possible for me to be here," he said. "Even with a group of three or four great players, you can't win on your own."

Figo is the first Portuguese player to win the FIFA award, but he acknowledged the talent now present in the national side, even though success has often eluded them.

"I think Portugal have gone through an outstanding period, especially with the younger teams, even if the continuity hasn't always been there. We've had trouble translating it into success sometimes."

In many ways, Figo's award came a year too late. After his performances at Euro 2000, he was unfortunate to finish behind Zidane in last year's FIFA poll. However, he did win both the *World Soccer* and *France Football* awards in 2000.

His victory in Zurich was in recognition not only of Portugal's successful World Cup qualifying campaign but also of the way in which he negotiated the often poisonous journey from Barcelona to Madrid.

The 'world's most expensive player' tag weighed heavily on Figo following his £37.5 million move to the Bernabeu in summer 2000. That deal has since been eclipsed by Zidane's £47.2m transfer to Real Madrid last summer.

In Madrid, Figo has forged a close friendship with Raul, a sharp move considering the regard with which Raul is held by *Madrilenos*. But not so surprising when you consider that in Barcelona, Figo's closest friend was Pep Guardiola, as influential a figure in the Catalan capital as Raul is in Madrid.

The 130 national coaches who voted in this year's award – down from 141 last year – were clearly influenced by televised coverage of the Champions League. For the first time in the short history of the FIFA award, the top three players were all European.

The FIFA World Player award was first conceived by ESM (European Sports Magazines, of which *World Soccer* is the UK member) in 1992. But the event is now run solely by FIFA. This year's gala dispensed with some of the less noteworthy presentations,

Uneasy...Zen-Ruffinen

'I played in a team which made it possible for me to win this award'

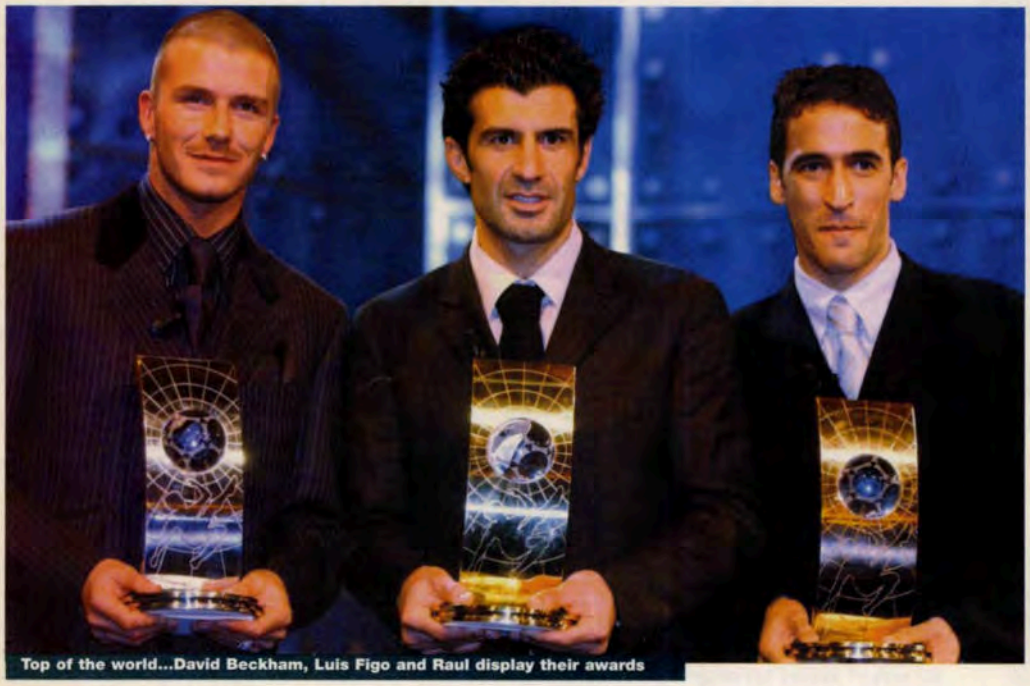
Luis Figo

Paolo patter...fair play award winner Di Canio gets chatty; Beckenbauer looks on

The month in pictures

● 07/12/01...Rudi Voller is to remain as national coach of Germany until 2006, the German federation confirms

● 09/12/01...Alaves win 2-0 at Zaragoza to remain top of the Spanish Liga. But champions Real Madrid are now only two points behind following a 2-0 victory at Mallorca



Top of the world...David Beckham, Luis Figo and Raul display their awards

but FIFA remains determined to turn the event into a light entertainment TV show.

Hence the faintly ridiculous sight of general secretary Michel Zen-Ruffinen, complete with Britney Spears-style microphone headset, playing sidekick to TV presenter Amanda Mclaine. Zen-Ruffinen, dignified to the last, looked distinctly uncomfortable.

This year, FIFA added a new award for female player of the year, which was won by Mia Hamm of the USA, ahead of China's Sun Wen and another American, Tiffeny Milbrett.

Honduras, who reached the semi-finals of the Copa America after beating Brazil and narrowly missed out on World Cup qualification, were team of the year.

Paolo Di Canio was the recipient of FIFA's Fair Play award. In West Ham's match at Everton last year, he won widespread praise after catching the ball when in a goalscoring position so that injured Everton goalkeeper Paul Gerrard could receive treatment.

Ironically, Di Canio was banned for 11 matches in 1998 for pushing over referee Paul Alcock while playing for Sheffield Wednesday.

But under the bright lights of a TV studio in Zurich, that was quietly forgotten.

● *Full voting details in World Service.*

2001 FIFA WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR

1	Luis Figo	250 pts
2	David Beckham	238
3	Raul Gonzalez	96
4	Zinedine Zidane	94
5	Rivaldo	92
6	Juan Sebastian Veron	71
7	Oliver Kahn	65
8	Michael Owen	61
9	Andrii Shevchenko	46
10	Francesco Totti	40

2001 EUROPEAN FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR

1	Michael Owen	176 pts
2	Raul Gonzalez	140
3	Oliver Kahn	114
4	David Beckham	102
5	Francesco Totti	57
6	Luis Figo	56
7	Rivaldo	20
8	Andrii Shevchenko	18
9=	Thierry Henry	14
	Zinedine Zidane	14

NOTES AND QUOTES

"In retrospect it wasn't such a bad thing that we had to take the play-off route to qualify for the World Cup."
Germany coach Rudi Voller becomes glassy-eyed about that 5-1 loss to England.

Life on the other side...Van Basten

"The time has come for me to see whether I can become a good coach. I'm only 37 and I'm far too young to sit around till the end of the line."
Marco Van Basten announces he is to start a Dutch federation coaching course.

"I was persuaded by my son Paolo. He wanted me to try something new, far from Italy."
New Paraguay coach Cesare Maldini admits filial prompting played a big part in his decision to take up a World Cup challenge down Asuncion way.

"Figo is older and doesn't appear to be as motivated as he once was. I wouldn't pay a peseta to bring him back."
Barcelona vice-president Gabriel Masfurrol takes issue with the choice of Luis Figo as FIFA World Player of the Year.

● 10/12/01...Roy Hodgson parts company with Udinese following an argument over disputed remarks made to an English newspaper

● 12/12/01...Dutch goalkeeper Sander Westerveld, out of favour at Liverpool following the signings of Jerzy Dudek and Chris Kirkland, lines up a loan move to Spanish side Real Sociedad

● 13/12/01...Former Italy coach Cesare Maldini is set to take charge of Paraguay's World Cup finals campaign

● 13/12/01...Lucas Radebe could miss the World Cup after damaging ankle ligaments playing for Leeds' reserves

Q & A: Nicolas Anelka

The French striker tells Luke Nicoli about his move to Liverpool

You left Arsenal saying English football didn't suit you; so why come back?

I refute the claims that I was disillusioned with English football – it was always in my mind to come back at some stage. I left Arsenal because it had been a dream, since I was a young boy growing up in Paris, that if I had the chance to play for Real Madrid, I would pursue that goal. Things didn't work out for me there, but now I am back in English football and hope to make the most of my opportunity this time.

So what went wrong with your 'dream move'?

Basically, Real did not suit my style of play. At the beginning I was enjoying myself and was accustomed to the system of our coach, John Toshack. Unfortunately, results were not in keeping with the demands of the supporters and the press, and everyone was pointing the finger at me and the huge transfer fee. The arrival of Vicente Del Bosque only hindered my situation and I soon realised that I did not fit into his system of play. I was delighted to return home to Paris Saint-Germain.

You're now at Liverpool. How did it come about?

Everybody is aware I was having problems at PSG. I didn't always agree with the direction of the club, and my relationship with the coach [Luis Fernandez] was not as amiable as it should have been. But sometimes in football things do not go your way, and I found myself out of the team. So when the chance came to join a club of Liverpool's stature, I weighed up my options and thought it was the best move for me at this stage of my career.

Having scored just twice for PSG this season, did you move to salvage your World Cup dreams?

I am fiercely patriotic and it is my ambition, like all French players, to play for my country in the game's biggest tournament. I was disappointed to miss out four years ago, despite having helped Arsenal to the championship, so I want to stake a claim this time. Aime Jacquet said I was too young, too inexperienced, but I have now played for some of Europe's biggest clubs. Yet I am under no illusions. I need to be playing and scoring regularly to get back in contention, but I couldn't be at a bigger club than Liverpool to help realise all my dreams, not just those that come in the summer.

Why did you choose Liverpool?

It was important to join a team where the management have as much faith in my ability as I have. I knew Gerard Houllier from my time with the French junior sides at Clairefontaine, so he knows what to expect from me, and I know what I'm going to get from him. We spoke several times before my arrival and he said I will be a part of his plans for the rest of the season. But it was also important to join a big club with a great history, who are also in contention for the major trophies. Liverpool fit those criteria and now it's up to me.

You have been signed to replace Robbie Fowler. Does that bring extra pressure?

When I made my debut at Aston Villa, I had a certain amount of apprehension because I know what Robbie meant to Liverpool fans and his goalscoring record is one of the best in Europe. But they immediately started chanting my name and it was at that moment I realised that I had truly made the right decision. Naturally, I am a little rusty but I'm confident that the fans will soon see the best of me and that I can carry on the tradition that comes with wearing the No 9 shirt for Liverpool.

Some people say you and Michael Owen are too similar.

When I first arrived at the Liverpool training ground, Michael was away receiving his European Player of the Year award, but he phoned to welcome me. I appreciated that; it showed how determined he is to make the partnership work. We have worked well in training since and there is no reason why two players who have pace and are

The month in pictures

● 14/12/01...Veteran USA international Earnie Stewart is voted American Player of the Year, ahead of Claudio Reyna (second) and Jeff Agoos (third)

● 15/12/01...A tabloid newspaper reports comments by a member of David Beckham's management company that the player was said to be "spitting blood" after being dropped by Alex Ferguson from Manchester United's starting line-up

direct can't work together. I'm sure defenders would rather deal with just one fast opponent instead of two, so we can exploit that. But this isn't just about Michael and myself. He is a truly great player but we have a number of international forwards at the club, who are all capable of fulfilling a role in the side.

Are you disappointed that the move is only a loan deal?

I am not looking at the deal as a temporary one. I would love to stay here and I'm going to work hard to ensure that I get a permanent contract. The best possible outcome would be for me to help the club win the championship, which we are very capable of doing, and then sign – but I would put pen to paper today if I was asked. I really feel a part of the set-up here already.

Will it be a strange feeling when you return to play at Arsenal?

Not really. Football brings such situations and you have to adjust accordingly. I do not expect a good response from the Arsenal fans whenever I face them but I was a young boy at Highbury and I am more mature now. I was happy with my form and my goal ratio during my time there, and I will never forget what Arsene Wenger did for my career. I still have a number of friends at the club and it is good to see Arsenal playing well, although with their quality that is no surprise.

ESM ELEVEN

EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

TEAM OF THE MONTH - DECEMBER 2001

HOW THEY LINE UP

Lehmann (Borussia Dortmund, 4 votes); Coloccini (Alaves, 2), Mexes (Auxerre, 2), Samuel (Roma, 6); Emerson (Roma, 4), Raul (Real Madrid, 3), Zidane (Real Madrid, 4), Giggs (Manchester United, 3); Van Nistelrooy (Manchester United, 3), Vieri (Internazionale, 7), Fowler (Leeds, 4)

A BOLA (Por)

Given (Newcastle); P Neville (Man Utd), Samuel (Roma), Jorge Costa (Charlton), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid), Diouf (Lens), Zidane (Real Madrid), Giggs (Man Utd); Raul (Real Madrid), Vieri (Internazionale), Fowler (Leeds)

DON BALON (Spa)

Lehmann (Borussia Dortmund); Coulibaly (Lens), Basler (Kaiserslautern), Ferdinand (Leeds), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid); Doni (Atalanta), Solano (Newcastle), Lima (Roma), Fadiga (Auxerre); Vieri (Internazionale), Urzaiz (Athletic Bilbao)

FOOT MAGAZINE (Big)

Lehmann (Borussia Dortmund); Panucci (Roma), Baumann (Werder Bremen), J Zanetti (Internazionale), Elliott (Newcastle); Ballack (Bayer Leverkusen), Emerson (Roma), Sergio (Deportivo La Coruna), Pedron (Lens); Vieri (Internazionale), Fowler (Leeds)

GAZZETTA DELLO SPORT (Ita)

Kahn (Bayern Munich); Contra (Milan), Samuel (Roma), Blanc (Man Utd), Candela (Roma); Eriberto (Chievo), Ivan Helguera (Real Madrid), Emerson (Roma), Ljungberg (Arsenal); Fowler (Leeds), Vieri (Internazionale)

KICKER (Ger)

Casillas (Real Madrid); Thuram (Juventus), Coloccini (Alaves), Samuel (Roma), Elliott (Newcastle); Solano (Newcastle), Totti (Roma), Zidane (Real Madrid), Pedron (Lens); Van Nistelrooy (Man Utd), Vieri (Internazionale)

SPORT EXPRESS (Rus)

Lehmann (Borussia Dortmund); Phil Neville (Man Utd), Mexes (Auxerre), Samuel (Roma); Ljungberg (Arsenal), Emerson (Roma), Zidane (Real Madrid), Dyer (Newcastle); Vieri (Internazionale), Raul (Real Madrid), Maric (Wolfsburg)

VOETBAL INTERNATIONAL (Hol)

Lehmann (Borussia Dortmund); Coloccini (Alaves), Mexes (Auxerre), Samuel (Roma); Doni (Atalanta), Zidane (Real Madrid), Emerson (Roma), Giggs (Man Utd); Vieri (Internazionale), Van Nistelrooy (Man Utd), Fowler (Leeds)

WORLD SOCCER (Eng)

Cudicini (Chelsea); Bernard (Newcastle), Samuel (Roma), Nesta (Lazio), J Zanetti (Internazionale); Vieira (Arsenal), Corini (Chievo), Raul (Real Madrid), Giggs (Man Utd); Urzaiz (Athletic Bilbao), Van Nistelrooy (Man Utd)

NOTES AND QUOTES

"Argentina are tactically on the button and are fantastic in the way they work with the resources available to them."
Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari commits a cardinal sin, describing his country's arch-rivals as an example to copy.

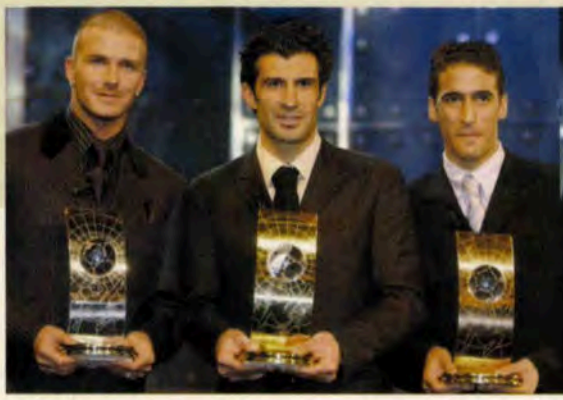
"Until now too many people have been trying to decide results from other places apart from the pitch."
On his re-election, Romanian federation president Mircea Sandu promises a war on match-rigging.

Moving up...Michael Ballack

"It's a shame but I've told Michael he's made the right decision."
Bayer Leverkusen coach Klaus Toppmoller backs Michael Ballack's move to Bayern Munich this summer.

"He's not competent enough to run a corner shop, let alone a supermarket like Benfica."
Leading Benfica shareholder Vitor Santos attacks the club's sports director, Luis Filipe Vieira.

The month in pictures



● 17/12/01...Luis Figo (centre) beats David Beckham (left) and Raul Gonzalez (right) to win the FIFA World Player of the Year award in Zurich

● 18/12/01...Daniel Passarella is sacked as coach of Parma

● 20/12/01...Giovanni Trapattoni hints at succeeding Alex Ferguson at Man United

● 23/12/01...Brescia are outplayed by Juventus, who win 4-0, while Roma beat Chievo 3-0

Paul Gardner

GLOBAL VIEW

Learning the lessons of gridiron

CASE HISTORY: Patient A felt certain television evidence could be used to help referees make the right decisions – but he was beset by fears that technology would be abused and would somehow undermine the referees' authority.

Patient A was lucky – he was dramatically cured of his doubts on June 29, 1997.

Patient A, you will be amazed to learn, was me. That critical June day they were playing the Final of the Copa America down in Bolivia. Twenty minutes into the second half it was Bolivia 1 Brazil 1. Watching on TV, I noted a minor incident between Edmundo and Bolivian defender Luis Cristaldo. Play continued, the ball went upfield.

But the director and his cameraman knew a thing or two about Edmundo, *o animal*, and they lingered on him. Edmundo obliged and decked Cristaldo with a left hook. Perfectly captured on the screen, replayed at once.

The roar told you that plenty of the fans in the stadium had seen the punch, as had some of the Bolivian players. They surrounded the referee, pointed to poor Cristaldo, stretched out on the pitch. The referee wandered around, consulted his assistant, consulted the fourth official...and did nothing. Apparently, nobody had seen anything.

Edmundo remained on the field – but only for another minute. The Brazilian bench had clearly seen what happened and substituted him as soon as possible. Brazil played on with 11 men and won the tournament.

Here we have a possible game-deciding incident, a flagrant foul, seen – and seen in replay after replay – by millions of viewers all over the world, seen by plenty of fans and players in the stadium, while the one guy who needs to know what happened, the referee, is wandering around in total ignorance. Yet the evidence was right there, instantly available. Surely a fifth (TV) official should be allowed – nay, obliged – to butt in and show the proof?

> 'A strong case can be made for a TV replay assistant with very limited power to intervene during a game'

Back in 1986 the American National (Gridiron) Football League had a similar idea. They set up a booth at each game in which sat a replay assistant (usually an ex-NFL referee). He was allowed to overrule plays on the basis of what he saw on his TV monitor.

Four points: the replay guy's authority was limited to certain types of play, mostly concerned with the position of the ball – whether it had crossed the end line or the sideline, whether a pass had been caught or trapped; a decision to change the referee's call had to be made before the next play had begun; it had to be made on the basis of "indisputable visual evidence"; and he watched only the replays that were part of the live telecast – he saw nothing that the fan at home didn't see.

The system was used for six seasons, but grew less and less popular. Greg Aiello, NFL's vice-president for public relations, says: "It wasn't limited enough. There were too many challenges, too many delays."

The scheme was dropped after the 1991 season. But 1998 produced a number of highly controversial refereeing decisions, and replay reviews returned in 1999, with several major revisions. The authority of the replay assistant to instigate the review of a play is now limited to the final two minutes of each half. During the rest of the game the review requests must come from the coaches, who are allowed two challenges each.

The other big change is that the final decision on any play has been moved out of the replay booth, down on to the pitch. On a questioned play, the head referee walks over to the sideline, sticks his head into a hood that covers a TV monitor, reviews the tape, and then announces his decision.

The average delay time is just over three minutes. But there aren't many delays – fewer than one per game, in fact. In the 496 games played in 1999 and 2000, a total of 442 reviews were made, resulting in 140 changes of decision.

"In some games, there are no stoppages," says Aiello. "The coaches naturally save their challenges, they don't want to waste them early in the game; later on, they may not need them. It's worked very well – the clubs have voted it in for the next three years. In the past, the system had to be renewed every year."

There is one factor here that soccer may find hard to credit. "There has been no overt opposition from the officials," says Aiello. "I think they welcome the opportunity to fix a mistake – and the system's also helped to show how many calls they get right."

This system seems pretty close to what Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger has suggested. But I don't see how a three-minute delay could be shortened, and I can't see fans waiting patiently for that long, two or three times a game. For that reason alone, Wenger's suggestion seems a non-starter. The money would probably do it in, too. The NFL's system costs about £6 million for each 248-game season. If you pro rata that up to the Premier League's 380 games, you get around £10m.

But that still leaves a huge problem to be solved – the Edmundo-type situation.

A strong case can be made for a replay assistant with very limited power to intervene during a game. It should help referees get it right more often. But I don't doubt the referees will raise the loudest objections.

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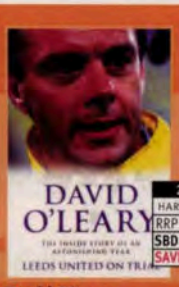

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The month in pictures

● 19/12/01...Lee Bowyer, acquitted of attacking an Asian student, is set to be offered an improved contract by Leeds

● 20/12/01...Nicolas Anelka joins Liverpool on loan from Paris Saint-Germain until the end of the season

● 22/12/01...After a disappointing time at Celta Vigo, South African striker Benni McCarthy (centre) joins FC Porto on loan in a bid to win a place in his country's squad at the 2002 World Cup

● 23/12/01...Former coach Arrigo Sacchi (right) returns to Parma for a third spell, this time as technical director following the sacking of Daniel Passarella

TALENT SCOUT AFRICA

Mark Gleeson selects 10 rising stars of African football who have yet to be snapped up by European sides

Goal hungry...Esperance's Ali Zitouni

1 GILBERTO
Club: Petro Atletico (Ang), Born: 21.09.82
Dominant player with proven capabilities in central midfield, on the right and also in attack, where he has played for Angola's national team and figured strongly in the African Champions League for his club last year. Already the subject of a proposed £650,000 move to Al Ahly of Egypt.

2 FLAVIO
Petro Atletico (Ang), 30.12.79
Eight goals in the African Champions League campaign made him the top scorer in the competition last year and a candidate for the newly inaugurated Player of the Tournament award, to be announced in April. Quick pace and a deadly shot make him a classic predator, although his lack of height can count against him at times.

3 IBRAHIM SAID
Al Ahly (Egy), 16.10.79
Already a regular member of the Egyptian national team, Said has all the signs of being an international regular for years to come. Comfortable as a sweeper or destroyer in defence, he uses his pace and ability to read the game to good effect and made a marked difference to his club's successful campaign in the African Champions League once he returned from suspension.

4 ALI ZITOUNI
Esperance (Tun), 11.01.81
Injury has kept Zitouni out for several months but he has a proven goalscoring appetite, both for club and country. Has shown great maturity with his ability to find space in the penalty area and has thrived off the service he receives at Esperance. Other qualities include good heading ability, a neat first touch and lots of pace.

5 DILLON SHEPPARD
Ajax Cape Town (SAf), 27.02.79
A cultured left foot and no shortage of technical ability have made Sheppard one of the more exciting prospects in the South African Premier League, particularly now he has also learnt to rein in his poor disciplinary record. If given a run at the African Nations Cup finals, he could emerge as a star for the future, having been included in the final squad of 22 by national team coach Carlos Queiroz.

6 BENNETT MNGUNI
Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf), 16.12.73
A latecomer to the top ranks, Mnguni's distinctive feature is his incredible workrate, and he was outstanding in the run of his Pretoria club to the Final of last year's African Champions League. Close control also makes him invaluable on the edge of the area, and he can be particularly effective playing behind the two strikers. Also has a reputation for spectacular goals from set-pieces.

7 WAEL GOMAA
Al Ahly (Egy), 03.08.75
A spectacular buy in the off-season for Al Ahly, Gomaa's distinctive shaven-headed look was a constant reassuring sight in defence for the Egyptian club over the past six months. Playing on the right side of the back four, the former Al Mahalla full-back has matured quickly into one of the best defenders in Africa.

8 CHARLES TAYLOR
Hearts of Oak (Gha), 17.06.81
A winner with his Accra club in the 2000 African Champions League, he also played for Ghana in the World Cup qualifiers. Adept either on the wing or up front, he has a swift burst of pace, a cultured cross and plenty of skill to take on opposing defenders.

9 YORDANUS ABEY
EEPCO (Eth), 28.03.84
A precocious talent uncovered at last February's African Youth Championship, where he was top scorer for hosts Ethiopia. He reproduced that form for the senior national side in December's East and Central African Senior Challenge Cup. Abey is also the leading scorer in the Ethiopian League this season, even though he is not yet 18.

10 STEPHEN ODURO
Asante Kotoko (Gha), 13.04.83
Surprisingly left out of Ghana's Under-20 team that went to Argentina for the 2001 World Youth Cup, but the midfielder has bounced back from that blow in recent months. One of the few youngsters with the potential for a European club career who is still playing in Ghana's Premier League.

Artist's impression of the new trophy

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GROUP A

19 Jan 16.00	Mali		Liberia	Bamako 1 BBC
21 Jan 16.00	Algeria		Nigeria	Bamako 1 BBC
24 Jan 19.00	Mali		Nigeria	Bamako 1 BBC
25 Jan 19.30	Liberia		Algeria	Bamako 1 BBC
28 Jan 18.00	Mali		Algeria	Bamako 1 BBC
28 Jan 18.00	Liberia		Nigeria	Mopti BBC

GROUP B

20 Jan 19.30	South Africa		Burkina Faso	Segou BBC
21 Jan 16.00	Morocco		Ghana	Segou BBC
24 Jan 16.00	South Africa		Ghana	Segou BBC
26 Jan 15.30	Burkina Faso		Morocco	Segou
30 Jan 16.00	South Africa		Morocco	Segou BBC
30 Jan 16.00	Burkina Faso		Ghana	Mopti BBC

GROUP C

20 Jan 17.30	Cameroon		DR Congo	Sikasso BBC
21 Jan 18.00	Togo		Ivory Coast	Sikasso BBC
25 Jan 17.30	Cameroon		Ivory Coast	Sikasso BBC
26 Jan 17.30	DR Congo		Togo	Sikasso BBC
29 Jan 16.00	Cameroon		Togo	Sikasso BBC
29 Jan 16.00	Dr Congo		Ivory Coast	Kayes BBC

GROUP D

20 Jan 15.30	Egypt		Senegal	Bamako 2 BBC
21 Jan 19.00	Zambia		Tunisia	Bamako 2 BBC
25 Jan 15.30	Egypt		Tunisia	Bamako 2
26 Jan 19.30	Senegal		Zambia	Bamako 2 BBC
31 Jan 16.00	Egypt		Zambia	Bamako 2 BBC
31 Jan 16.00	Senegal		Tunisia	Kayes BBC

QUARTER-FINALS

3 Feb 16.00	Quarter-Final 1	(Winner Group B)	(Runner-up Group A)	Kayes BBC
3 Feb 19.00	Quarter-Final 2	(Winner Group A)	(Runner-up Group B)	Bamako 1 BBC
4 Feb 16.00	Quarter-Final 3	(Winner Group C)	(Runner-up Group D)	Sikasso BBC
4 Feb 19.00	Quarter-Final 4	(Winner Group D)	(Runner-up Group C)	Bamako 2 BBC

SEMI-FINALS

7 Feb 16.00	Semi-Final 1	(Winner Quarter-Final 4)	(Runner-up Quarter-Final 2)	Bamako 2 BBC
7 Feb 19.00	Semi-Final 2	(Winner Quarter-Final 1)	(Runner-up Quarter-Final 3)	Bamako 1 BBC

THIRD PLACE

9 Feb 16.00		(Loser Semi-Final 1)	(Loser Semi-Final 2)	Mopti

FINAL

BBC

10 Feb | 16.00 | Bamako 1

(Winner Semi-Final 1) (Winner Semi-Final 2)

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Hands on...Cameroon receive the African Nations Cup in Lagos two years ago

Cameroon face tough defence

The finals line-up is particularly strong, writes Mark Gleeson

CAMEROON head an impressive list of qualifiers for the African Nations Cup finals in Mali and are certain to face a bruising tussle in their bid to retain their continental title.

All five of Africa's representatives at this summer's World Cup are taking part – the Indomitable Lions themselves, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia – and they will thereby gain valuable competitive match practice in a tournament situation ahead of the trip to Asia.

The World Cup countries all feature among the favourites for the African event, but the winners may well come from outside their ranks. Notable contenders include Morocco and Ivory Coast, who have caught the eye over the past 12 months.

Cameroon, the Group C seeds, go into the tournament under a new coach. German Winfried Schafer's appointment in September was the fourth change of manager in a year and the Bundesliga veteran has had just one game to look over his new team. This was a creditable goalless draw against fellow World Cup finalists Poland in Warsaw.

However, Schafer, who has never before coached outside Germany, has twice called the squad together to train in his home country and left the impression that a little Teutonic efficiency is going to work wonders in pulling together a disparate group of talented individuals.

"Cameroon play thrilling attacking football, but they need to improve on tactics and discipline. That's why they wanted a German coach and that's why I've taken the job," said Schafer.

Cameroon will be based in Sikasso, where their only serious threat for group top spot comes from the Ivorians (the top two from the four groups of four qualify for the quarter-finals). However, there will be plenty of challenges awaiting them in the knockout phase.

Nigeria, whom Cameroon beat on penalties in the Final in Lagos two years ago, have high hopes of their own, plus a coach on a mission. Shaibu Amodu, who has held the Nigerian job as a caretaker on four separate occasions, has been told he will stay in the post permanently if he can produce results at the Nations Cup. Failure for Nigeria, however, will mean his departure and the predictable last-minute search for a high-profile foreign coach to take the Super Eagles to the World Cup.

Amodu's survival depends on the quality of squad he can muster for the finals. Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Austin Okocha has spoken of his reluctance to go to Mali for the three-week event, and there will be the inevitable clash with Arsenal about the services of Nwankwo Kanu.

The spotlight will also fall on Senegal during the finals. They were the surprise package in the African section of the World Cup qualifiers, sensationally winning a finals berth at the expense of three previous finalists – Morocco, Egypt and Algeria.

Flamboyant French coach Bruno Metsu has a highly-talented squad, with several of his players based in France. Lens striker El Hadji Ousseynou Diouf, once the bad boy of the French club circuit, scored vital goals to ensure Senegal pipped Morocco for a World Cup place, while Aliou Cisse is a classy defender with PSG.

South Africa and Tunisia are also expected to be contenders. Bafana Bafana have been boosted by the availability of captain Shaun Bartlett, despite his club commitments at Charlton, and the finals present Sibusiso Zuma with a chance to explode on the African stage.

Henri Michel has recently taken over the ageing Tunisian side, who are notoriously difficult to beat, even if somewhat predictable. Michel, the former French national team coach, was at the last Nations Cup finals in charge of Morocco, whose failure to get past the first round led to his sacking.

Morocco are now led by Humberto Coelho, who took Portugal to the semi-finals of the last European Championship and who has made it clear he wants the side to atone for the World Cup qualifying failure.

Algeria are seeking a revival now

FINALS SCHEDULE

Group A

Jan 19	Mali v Liberia (Bamako, March 26 stadium, 16.00)
Jan 21	Algeria v Nigeria (Bamako, March 26 stadium, 16.00)
Jan 24	Mali v Nigeria (Bamako, March 26 stadium, 19.00)
Jan 25	Algeria v Liberia (Bamako, March 26 stadium, 19.30)
Jan 28	Mali v Algeria (Bamako, March 26 stadium, 18.00)
Jan 28	Liberia v Nigeria (Mopti, 18.00)

Group B

Jan 20	Burkina Faso v South Africa (Segou, 19.30)
Jan 21	Ghana v Morocco (Segou, 16.00)
Jan 24	Ghana v South Africa (Segou, 16.00)
Jan 26	Burkina Faso v Morocco (Segou, 15.30)
Jan 30	Morocco v South Africa (Segou, 16.00)
Jan 30	Burkina Faso v Ghana (Mopti, 16.00)

Group C

Jan 20	Cameroon v DR Congo (Sikasso, 17.30)
Jan 21	Ivory Coast v Togo (Sikasso, 18.00)
Jan 25	Cameroon v Ivory Coast (Sikasso, 17.30)
Jan 26	DR Congo v Togo (Sikasso, 17.30)
Jan 29	Cameroon v Togo (Sikasso, 16.00)
Jan 29	DR Congo v Ivory Coast (Kayes, 16.00)

Group D

Jan 20	Egypt v Senegal (Bamako, Modibo Keita stadium, 15.30)
Jan 21	Tunisia v Zambia (Bamako, Modibo Keita stadium, 19.00)
Jan 25	Egypt v Tunisia (Bamako, Modibo Keita stadium, 15.30)
Jan 26	Senegal v Zambia (Bamako, Modibo Keita stadium, 19.30)
Jan 31	Egypt v Zambia (Bamako, Modibo Keita stadium, 16.00)
Jan 31	Senegal v Tunisia (Kayes, 16.00)

Quarter-finals

Feb 3	(1) Winners B v runners-up A (Kayes, 16.00)
Feb 3	(2) Winners A v runners-up B (Bamako, March 26 stadium, 19.00)
Feb 4	(3) Winners C v runners-up D (Sikasso, 16.00)
Feb 4	(4) Winners D v runners-up C (Bamako, Modibo Keita stadium, 19.00)

Semi-finals

Feb 7	Winners (2) v Winners (4) (Bamako, Modibo Keita stadium, 16.00)
Feb 7	Winners (1) v Winners (3) (Bamako, March 26 stadium, 19.00)

Third-place play-off

Feb 9	(Mopti, 16.00)

Final

Feb 10	(Bamako, March 26 stadium, 16.00)

All times GMT

Rabah Madjer is back at the helm, while the Ivorians have the capacity to surprise a few as well. Hosts Mali are yet another team to consider, even if their preparations have been patchy and coach Henri Kasperczak took over only in November.

Mali have ploughed millions of pounds into infrastructure for the event, adding to the pressure on the national side to deliver some return. It will be the first Nations Cup finals in which six different venues have been used, with five new stadiums and one reconstructed. Off site, though, life is expected to be difficult, with spartan facilities for the teams and the rest of the circus.

FOR THE RECORD

Previous Finals

1957 (Sudan)	Egypt 4 Ethiopia 0
1959 (Egypt)	Egypt 2 Sudan 1
1962 (Ethiopia)	Ethiopia 4 Egypt 2 (aet)
1963 (Ghana)	Ghana 3 Sudan 0
1965 (Tunisia)	Ghana 3 Tunisia 2 (aet)
1968 (Ethiopia)	Congo-Kinshasa 1 Ghana 0
1970 (Sudan)	Sudan 1 Ghana 0
1972 (Cameroon)	Congo 3 Mali 2
1974 (Egypt)	Zaire 2 Zambia 0
1976 (Ethiopia)	Morocco won final round league group
1978 (Ghana)	Ghana 2 Uganda 0
1980 (Nigeria)	Nigeria 3 Algeria 0
1982 (Libya)	Ghana 1 Libya 1 *Ghana 7-6 on pens*
1984 (Ivory Coast)	Cameroon 3 Nigeria 1
1986 (Egypt)	Egypt 0 Cameroon 0 *Egypt 5-4 on pens*
1988 (Morocco)	Cameroon 1 Nigeria 0
1990 (Algeria)	Algeria 1 Nigeria 0
1992 (Senegal)	Ivory Coast 0 Ghana 0 *Ivory Coast 11-10 on pens*
1994 (Tunisia)	Nigeria 2 Zambia 1
1996 (South Africa)	South Africa 2 Tunisia 0
1998 (Burkina Faso)	Egypt 2 South Africa 0
2000 (Ghana/Nigeria)	Cameroon 2 Nigeria 2 *Cameroon 4-3 on pens*

Most titles won

4 – Egypt (1957, 1959, 1986, 1998);
Ghana (1963, 1965, 1978, 1982)

Most finals attended

7 – Alain Gouamene (Ivory Coast) (1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000)

Most finals matches played

24 – Alain Gouamene (Ivory Coast)

Most finals goals scored (total)

14 – Laurent Pokou (Ivory Coast) (1968, 1970)

Most finals goals (single event)

9 – Ndaye Mulumba (Zaire) (1974)

Most goals in a match

5 – Laurent Pokou (Ivory Coast 6 Ethiopia 1, 1970)

Fastest goal

23 seconds – Ayman Mansour (Egypt 4 Gabon 0, 1994)

Youngest competitor

16 years, 2 months, 30 days – Chiva Star Nzighou (Gabon, 2000)

Winner as a player and coach

Mahmoud Al-Gohari (Egypt) (1957 and 1998)

Coach with most titles

3 – Charles Gyamfi (Ghana) (1963, 1965, 1978)

ALGERIA

French foreign legion called in

Coach Madjer has looked abroad to begin his rebuilding process

RABAH MADJER is back as coach of Algeria, charged with revitalising a side whose fortunes have declined over the past decade.

The former European Cup winner and African Footballer of the Year took over in August for his second spell and has already rung the changes, looking to the large Franco-Algerian Diaspora for new talent. At least seven France-born players will be in the squad for Mali, plus new faces such as Rachid Djebaili of Scotland's St Johnstone and Nassim Akrour of Istres, who won his first cap in December.

Hoping...Algeria look to improve

Madjer has been quite open about his approach to the Nations Cup finals: that it will primarily serve as part of a rebuilding process with ambitions set ahead towards the 2006 World Cup qualifiers.

The side is led by veteran Abdelhafid Tasfaout, a loyal servant over the past decade and a consistent scorer at international level. But he needs service to be effective and there have been question marks over the availability of Djamel Belmadi from Marseille and another veteran, Moussa Saib, once at Tottenham and now with Monaco. Saib has retired several times from international football but has been persuaded back. His only problem now is injury.

Belgium-based Nasreddine Kraouche has shown great progress in midfield and lines up alongside Omar Belbey, while ageing Mahieddine Meftah has been restored to the defence for his fifth Nations Cup tournament. He was a team-mate of Madjer in the 1990 trophy-winning side.

The 'Fennecs' will be no pushovers but they lack a match-winner and the confidence needed to progress as far as the semi-finals. Madjer admits he has a lot of work to do before his side come anywhere near recapturing the glory days.

WHAT THEY SAY

Rabah Madjer

"Instability holds back our football. But I have been motivated by a contract that allows me the goal of qualifying for the 2006 World Cup finals. In my view, and I hope those who recruited me, these Nations Cup finals are not important."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Abdelhafid Tasfaout

11.02.69. Guingamp (Fra).

Tasfaout would be chasing a Nations Cup appearances record if Algeria had not been disqualified in 1994, while injury sidelined him in 1996. But he is still leading scorer with 33 goals. After winning the League with Mouloudia Oran, he joined Auxerre in 1995 and moved to Guingamp two years later.

LIBERIA

Out for revenge

Weah and co look to overcome their World Cup qualifying failure

LIBERIA must get over the sulks that have hampered their side since missing out on World Cup qualification, when they threw away a seemingly secure position at the top of their group.

The failure led to star player George Weah having his house and property attacked and all sorts of political ramifications, which continued right through to the final month ahead of the trip to Mali.

Four players were suspended after incidents on a tour of the United States in August, and a friendly against Egypt was cancelled the day before its scheduled November date when only eight Liberians arrived for the game. Meanwhile, Weah, master of the team both on and off the pitch, has clashed with obstinate federation officials over the pre-tournament training programme.

Spirited...Liberia could rattle Nigeria

The former World Footballer of the Year will surely be taking a bow from the African stage at the finals, which is only the second time Liberia have qualified. But 'Mister George' is scoring again, alongside compatriot James Debbah, at Al Jazira in the United Arab Emirates, and who knows how much longer he will continue to play?

Most of Liberia's overseas-based contingent were named in a provisional squad for the finals, with players called up from France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Lebanon, Qatar, Portugal, Scotland, Switzerland and the USA. It is a disparate group but never short on team spirit and large dollops of patriotism.

Their group in Bamako presents them with the chance for revenge on Nigeria, who beat them to a spot at this year's World Cup finals. It could well be the game to watch in the first round.

WHAT THEY SAY

George Weah

"Africa is not like Europe, where priority is given to the team. In Africa it is the officials who must be on top of everything and that is what causes problems. They don't care enough about the players, they care more about themselves."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Christopher Wreh

14.05.75. St Mirren (Sco).

Wreh was recommended to Arsene Wenger at Monaco and followed the coach from France to Arsenal. But Highbury provided little opportunity for the striker, who has led a nomadic existence ever since, playing at AEK Athens, Birmingham, De Graafschap and Al Hilal in Saudi Arabia. He is now at St Mirren in Scotland.

MALI

Strangers in their own home

The hosts have suffered from too many team changes and too few matches

A 3-0 THRASHING at home by neighbours Ivory Coast in December, in a match to mark the opening of the stadium in Sikasso, suggests new coach Henri Kasperczak will struggle to deliver on the huge expectations of the home country.

Mali return to the Nations Cup finals for the first time since they were surprise semi-finalists in 1994 and ruined the tournament for hosts Tunisia. This time the boot will be on the other foot as *Les Aigles* seek to keep alive their interest past the first round. This is important not only to the team but also to the success of the tournament, since the progress of the home side is directly linked to whether the stadiums at the Nations Cup are full or not.

Countdown...but Mali have it all to do

Former Polish international Kasperczak, who has been to past Nations Cup finals as coach of Ivory Coast and Tunisia, has a massive task to perform in only a brief time. Mali have been short of serious match practice, having not had to qualify for these finals and following their surprise elimination by Libya at the preliminary round stage of the 2002 World Cup qualifiers.

Italian coach Romano Matte was fired in October after a series of friendly encounters in France, which culminated in a 6-0 defeat by Guingamp. There has also been endless experimentation with various combinations of the 30-odd Malien players based overseas, mostly in the lower leagues in France but also in Egypt, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kuwait, Holland, Turkey and Tunisia.

Weeks before the finals, the coaching staff were still trying out players who looked likely candidates for the squad and, as a result, will go into the tournament without any sort of consistency.

WHAT THEY SAY

Henri Kasperczak

"My aim is for Mali to make it to the quarter-finals. After that? Well, anything can happen."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Boubacar Diarra

15.07.79. Freiburg (Ger).

German football has been raving about the 22-year-old Freiburg defender this season. Indeed, dreadlocked Diarra, in his fourth season in the Bundesliga, is now rated as one of the best foreign imports. Formerly with Djoliba and Real Bamako, he moved to Germany in July 1997, aged just 18. Club commitments mean he has seen little national team action, but he will be a key figure in Mali.

NIGERIA

Time to deliver

For all their talent and reputation, Nigeria have a relatively poor finals record

THE Super Eagles will again be among the favourites for the Nations Cup, but it is astonishing that despite their high profile in African football, they have won the trophy just twice.

Admittedly, they were controversially beaten on penalties by Cameroon in the 2000 Final, played on home soil in Lagos. Nevertheless, their reputation within Africa suggests that they should have won the tournament more often.

Coach Shaibu Amodu is expected to have a full-strength squad available, including Chelsea's Celestine Babayaro and Nwankwo Kanu of Arsenal.

There has been a reluctance from the likes of Paris Saint-Germain's Jay-Jay Okocha to make the three-week trip to Mali, but Nigerian officials have made it clear that the road to World Cup selection lies through the Nations Cup. This will not have gone down too well with high-profile stars such as Sunday Oliseh, Victor Agali and Taribo West.

Aiming for victory...Kanu

Nigeria have the necessary manpower to take the title but have played only three matches since the end of the World Cup qualifying campaign in July. Even then, they sent a second-string side to South Korea for two games and had a far from full-strength turnout for a rain-soaked friendly against Japan in Southampton.

Babayaro's rehabilitation to the side after squabbles with the Nigerian FA over unpaid bills beefs up a jittery defence, behind which there is also a crisis in the goalkeeping department. But there is a star quality about Nigeria in midfield and up front, and hence they will surely prove hard to beat.

The tournament could also allow for the introduction of new, upcoming talent like Joseph Yobo at Marseille and Anderlecht's Ode Thompson, plus a return for Wilson Oruma. He is having a fine season at Servette, although Amodu has made it clear that his faith is in the tried and tested stars.

WHAT THEY SAY

Shaibu Amodu

"The Nations Cup will give us a good indication of what the team can offer in the World Cup, and we will use that as a benchmark."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Taribo West

26.03.74. Kaiserslautern (Ger).

Religious zeal is the trademark of West, called the 'pastor' by team-mates for his missionary work. Last season he won many admirers for his strength in defence at Derby but a permanent deal proved beyond the club's budget. After several months kicking his heels at Milan, West has now joined Kaiserslautern, seeking to wipe out three mediocre seasons in Italy's Serie A.

BURKINA FASO

Too much, too young?

The graduates from the successful Under-17 side can't make up for squad deficiencies

BURKINA FASO, once among the minnows of African football, have now qualified for the Nations Cup finals for the fourth successive time (once as hosts), while their Under-17 side reached the semi-finals of the recent World Championship in Trinidad & Tobago.

The country's president, Blaise Compoare, is a football nut who has sunk heavy resources into the team, and veteran Argentinian Luis Oscar Fullone has been brought in to coach the side. He replaced Sidiki Diarra, sacked at the end of the World Cup qualifiers, when the team finished only third, behind South Africa and Zimbabwe, in Group E.

Fullone won back-to-back Champions League titles with ASEC Abidjan of Ivory Coast in 1998 and Morocco's Raja Casablanca in 1999. He will bring a confidence to the side, but the truth is that the Burkinabe are still short on playing resources.

Tough challenge...Burkina Faso

Their major concern is over Mamadou Zongo, the 'wunderkind' of Burkina Faso football, who has been out since February after suffering a serious knee injury in action for his Dutch club Vitesse Arnhem. If he does not recover, it will put more pressure on the shoulders of Ousmane Sanou, another Holland-based forward, at Willem II. Fullone would be well served to pair Sanou with 24-year-old Isaac Nikiema, a relative newcomer to international football, who recently signed for German Third Division outfit Borussia Fulda. He is touted as having the potential to be a "new [Tony] Yeboah".

There are likely to be at least five players from the Under-17 side given quick promotions to the senior team, but they might well find the level of competition overwhelming. There is no denying it is a tough group for the Burkinabe, and they could well prove the whipping boys.

WHAT THEY SAY

Genk forward Moumou Dagano

"It is tough to leave my club to go to the Nations Cup but I am obliged to do so. I cannot leave my country in the lurch."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Ousmane Sanou

11.03.78. Willem II (Hol).

After five and a half seasons at Willem II, striker Ousmane Sanou has been told he can move on, and the Nations Cup finals present him with the perfect platform to perform for prospective new clubs. He has a good scoring record in the Dutch League, plus he will be just 24 a month after the tournament in Mali ends. A potential match winner for the Burkinabe.

GHANA

Black Stars lack sparkle

The four-times Nations Cup winners are still in the doldrums

Overstretched?...Ghana do not appear ready to mount a challenge for the title

GHANA have enjoyed most success in the Nations Cup, along with Egypt, each having won the tournament four times. But the latest generation of Black Stars look far from capable of emulating the success of their predecessors.

Two years ago, Ghana, as co-hosts, gave up without much fight in their quarter-final against South Africa, and this time have a tough opening round group from which Morocco and South Africa are favourites to progress.

To exacerbate the Black Stars' problems, coach Fred Osman Duodu has decided to drop captain Charles Akonnor. No plausible reason has been given for the sacking of the Bundesliga-based winger, and it has led to threats of a boycott from his deputy, Bayern Munich defender Samuel Osei Kuffour.

It now appears that Osman Duodu, who was only supposed to be temporarily in charge while a new foreign coach was sought, does not command the confidence of his key players.

Only a handful of the team's Europe-based stars bothered to respond to invitations to participate in the qualifiers for the 2002 finals. Osman Duodu has named a group of 12 expatriate players he hopes will travel to Mali, but it will be more of a jaunt away from the rigours of the winter cold for the likes of Kuffour, Stephen Appiah and Matthew Amoah than a serious quest for Nations Cup glory.

WHAT THEY SAY

Fred Osman Duodu

"Akonnor has not been invited as this is a technical matter and I have my own way and criteria for picking the side."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Matthew Amoah

24.10.80. Vitesse Arnhem (Hol).

Amoah's performances for his Dutch club make his call-up by Ghana long overdue. Nicknamed 'Klinsmann' in his native country, Amoah moved to Europe in 1998 from youth team Great Ambassadors FC. Last season he scored 10 goals on loan at Fortuna Sittard and has been among the goals in the current campaign for the ever-improving Vitesse.

MOROCCO

Atlas Lions look to bite back

Coelho's men can make up for the disappointment of World Cup failure

ONLY goal difference denied Morocco a place in this summer's World Cup finals, but the North Africans will be seeking compensation in the Nations Cup.

Morocco were bitterly disappointed after being pipped by Senegal to a place in Japan and South Korea but have used the experience to motivate their staff and players for success in Mali.

Coach Humberto Coelho, who two years ago was steering Portugal to the semi-finals of the European Championship, has set the tone by turning down a lucrative offer to coach Saudi Arabia at the World Cup finals. His decision was seen as a message that there is still unfinished business to attend to with the Atlas Lions and that Morocco intend to complete it at the Nations Cup finals.

Compensation claim...Morocco

Surprisingly, given their dominant position on the continent, Morocco have won only one Nations Cup title and that was way back in 1976, the only time the tournament was decided in a four-team final round group.

Failure to reach the quarter-finals at the last edition cost Frenchman Henri Michel his job, but many of the players who appeared then will be back for another concerted effort.

Captain Noureddine Naybet is approaching 100 caps and obviously keen to exit the African stage in style, while striker Salaheddine Bassir sees the tournament as a chance to rehabilitate his fading reputation.

Coelho is without the services of Aston Villa's Mustapha Hadji through injury, while Hadji's club-mate Hassan Kachloul asked to be excused from possible Nations Cup selection to concentrate on his career at Villa Park. However, Coventry City's Youssef Chippo and Youssef Safri are likely to be key members of the starting line-up.

WHAT THEY SAY

Humberto Coelho

"It has been very difficult to get the players together to prepare a team for Mali because of the strict FIFA regulations. We need them together for more than just five days before the Nations Cup starts to get the side properly prepared."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Adil Ramzi

14.07.77. PSV Eindhoven (Hol).

Ramzi is the new creative force of the Moroccan side, stepping into the role vacated of late by Mustapha Hadji. He played a pivotal part in PSV's championship-winning side last season and also secured a regular place in the Moroccan team. Made his name at Willem II, on loan from Udinese.

SOUTH AFRICA

Mixed messages

The team's preparation has been hampered by confusion over selection criteria

BAFANA BAFANA have been to the podium at the last three Nations Cup finals, finishing first, second and then third two years ago. It is going to be a lot harder this time round for a side who have lost their rhythm and have been sidetracked by mixed signals from Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz.

At first he said he was going to use the Nations Cup as a staging ground to give fringe players more international experience ahead of the World Cup in June. Regulars at their European clubs, like captain Shaun Bartlett of English Premiership side Charlton, would not be bothered by the trip to Mali.

Lost rhythm...South Africa

However, the political fallout from his pronouncement, plus a warning from the Confederation of African Football that they would not tolerate any second-string sides at the Nations Cup finals, led Queiroz to make a quick backtrack. Now the coach says the road to World Cup selection lies through the Nations Cup, leaving Bartlett among others in a quandary. They faced pressure from their clubs to continue playing domestic football, especially since their employers had earlier been led to believe by the South African FA that they would have the full services of their players.

It is no wonder that Leeds boss David O'Leary vowed he would never sign an African player again, in reference to the international commitments that defender Lucas Radebe used to have to juggle. Injury keeps Radebe from his fourth successive Nations Cup finals, a blow to Bafana Bafana's back line.

The midfield is also short on quality, but at least there is strength on the flanks, with Sibusiso Zuma on the right and Delron Buckley or Quinton Fortune on the left. Bartlett, top scorer at the last Nations Cup finals, is needed up front, where he is likely to team up with talented Siyabonga Nomvete, a recent signing at Udinese.

WHAT THEY SAY

Carlos Queiroz

"I want to be first and I want to be a winner, but it has never been my style to talk about outcomes because I cannot control that."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Siyabonga Nomvete

02.12.77. Udinese (Ita).

The pacy Nomvete finally got a run in the first team at Udinese just before Christmas, with the player desperately keen to deliver on the expectation that followed a two-year chase for his signature from Johannesburg club Kaizer Chiefs. In Serie A he has been employed as a wide midfielder but South Africa are certain to partner him in attack with captain Shaun Bartlett.

CAMEROON

Champions and favourites

The Indomitable Lions are well placed to retain the title

CAMEROON have a rich tradition in the Nations Cup, having won it for a third time in 2000. What's more, they go into this tournament with a much more settled team than normal and with dollops of confidence.

The finals also offer the Indomitable Lions' new German coach, Winfried Schafer, the chance to get to know his charges better, with the World Cup finals in mind.

Schafer will be aware that anything other than a place in the Final could cost him his job well before he can set his sights on Asia. The country's officials have had no compunction in the past about changing coaches who fail to deliver on their, sometimes excessive, expectations. Cameroon went through four coaches in 2001 alone.

Wide option...Salomon Olembe

This time, however, it is reasonable to expect Cameroon to win the event, given the team's form over the past 18 months. In the World Cup qualifiers there was little doubt from the start that they would reach the finals, and the only blemish was a disappointing showing at the Confederations Cup in Japan.

The strikeforce of Samuel Eto'o and Patrick Mboma is the most prolific on the continent and is ably backed up by an attacking midfield. Lauren Etame-Mayer is likely to play a lot further forward than he does at Arsenal, while Salomon Olembe and Geremi Njitap add to the options down the flanks.

In central midfield, Marc-Vivien Foe is a powerful presence, but the defence, marshalled by the unpredictable Rigobert Song, can be expected to ensure a few hair-raising moments for their team-mates.

If Cameroon can keep their discipline at the back, it will be difficult to bet against them keeping their continental title.

WHAT THEY SAY

Winfried Schafer

"Cameroon play thrilling attacking football. But they need to improve on tactics and discipline. That's why they wanted a German coach and that's why I've taken the job."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Pius N'Diefi

05.07.73. Sedan (Fra).

The striker plays second fiddle to the first-choice forward pairing of Eto'o and Mboma, but given half a chance in Mali is likely to make a strong bid for a regular starting berth. N'Diefi, born in Douala, has been scoring regularly for Sedan, his unfashionable French club. Previously with Lens and Valence.

DR CONGO

Too many players spoil the broth

Coach Watunda's open-door policy has led to selection chaos

THE former Zaire slipped into the finals with a last-gasp win over Zimbabwe in the qualifiers but have moved to make their team a whole lot more competitive by the time they get to Mali.

First the authorities appointed their fifth coach of the year, in August, calling back Louis Watunda to the post to take over from Russian Yuri Gavrilov. They then handed him a £700,000 budget to prepare the team.

Watunda has been on the road since October, first spending a month with home-based players in a training camp in South Africa and then taking 15 of these players to Europe to join up with professionals based there in another month of preparation, in Belgium.

Watunda was the coach when the Congolese were surprise semi-finalists in Burkina Faso four years ago but he is far from being an inspiring figure.

Costly preparation...DR Congo

Selection consistency has been a perennial problem for the Congolese and has got a lot worse with the decision to train in Europe – more and more Congolese players have emerged from the backwater of European club football to stake their claim for a place in the squad for Mali.

When Watunda first took over he announced a list of some 40 players he was considering for selection, a third of them based overseas. But this list changed on an almost weekly basis as more and more potential candidates came to the fore. So it would seem all the elaborate preparation has been sorely misplaced.

Good news for the Simbas, though, is confirmation that Shabani Nonda of Monaco will play in Mali, while Belgium-based Ali Lunkunku and Alain Masudi of Austria's Sturm Graz will be at the tournament too.

WHAT THEY SAY

Louis Watunda

"Congo has a great reputation in African football as the first black country to go to the World Cup finals, and our mission is to restore the reputation and fear we enjoyed."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Jean-Paul Boeka-Lisasi

06.06.74. Mechelen (Blg).

Boeka-Lisasi has been a journeyman in Belgium since joining Lokeren from AS Vita of Kinshasa in 1996. But last season's haul of 12 goals at Westerlo led to him being bought by Mechelen. Eight goals in his first 10 games of the new season suggested he was making inroads into repaying the investment.

IVORY COAST

Elephants spurred by bad memories

Things can only get better after the disturbing events of two years ago

THE Ivorians had a nightmare in Ghana at the last Nations Cup finals and an even more disturbing ending to their campaign. The West African country's military junta was so incensed by the Elephants' failure to get past the first round that the squad were flown straight back home to a military base in a charter plane for a few days of humiliating frog-marching and lectures on patriotism.

The regime of General Robert Guei is no longer in charge, so the same threat no longer hangs over the heads of the players. But there can be no doubt that their treatment in 2000 will still be at the back of their minds, providing a spur of sorts for a much more accomplished performance this time round.

Top striker...Ibrahima Bakayoko

The Ivorian preparations have been thorough, with regular training camps in the south of France and matches against French club opposition. Coach Lama Bamba has restored a winning spirit to the side, and for Marseille striker Ibrahima Bakayoko the past 12 months have been a golden period, as he displayed a devastating goalscoring proficiency for his country.

Bakayoko was top marksman in the African World Cup qualifiers with 10 goals in as many games, as well as being close to the top of the Nations Cup qualifiers scoring charts.

A flop at Everton in the English Premier League, Bakayoko is also finding his club form again at struggling Marseille, which is an ominous sign for opposing defences in Mali.

The prospect of the Ivorians persuading Christian Manfredini, of Serie A upstarts Chievo, to join their side meant they were even better placed to make a serious assault on the title.

WHAT THEY SAY

Ivory Coast-born former French international Basile Boli

"Ivory Coast have a good chance to get past the first round, even if they are sharing a group with Cameroon, who I think will be preoccupied with the World Cup and won't be concentrating too much on the Nations Cup."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Aruna Dindane

26.11.80. Anderlecht (Blg).

At Anderlecht, Dindane is described as being worth his weight in gold as he establishes himself as a star in the Belgian League and on the European stage. The young Ivorian has earned a reputation for his dribbling skills and is now finding the consistency he had earlier been criticised for lacking.

TOGO

Tiny country, big achievement

The small West African state has a notable Nations Cup record

Quality control...Togo (white) have a number of talented players

TOGO, one of Africa's smallest countries, have shown great consistency in reaching the Nations Cup finals for the third successive time. At the last finals, in Ghana, the team actually beat eventual winners Cameroon in the group phase, albeit in a match that was of academic interest only to their opponents.

It has been a remarkable feat by the tiny West African nation. There is no shortage of quality players in their line-up, either, although Togo's chances of any more upsets are allied to the number of key players they succeed in taking to Mali.

The most important absentee is the ageing Germany-based striker Bachirou Salou, who has not played for his country for the past four years after taking exception to criticism levelled at him by local fans. Salou, now at Hansa Rostock, has a proven goalscoring ability in the Bundesliga and would have added a whole new dimension to Togo's starting line-up.

However, the *Epeviers* (Hawks) have been boosted by the availability of forward Djima Oyawole and goalkeeper Kossi Agassa. Both were requested to remain with their European club sides – Belgian team Gent and Metz in France respectively – though both were named in the squad for Mali.

WHAT THEY SAY

Coach Tchanile Bana

"We weren't strong enough to have any hope of making the World Cup, so we concentrated our strength on the Nations Cup qualifiers, to make sure we got to the finals."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Adekanmi Olufade

07.01.80. Lille (Fra).

Olufade comes originally from Nigeria but will be one of Togo's major hopes in Mali. His move to Lille brought to four the number of countries in which he has played club football. Former Belgian national team coach Georges Leekens says of Olufade: "He is quick, has good technique and an instinct for goal."

EGYPT

Pharaohs winning generation game

Emerging new talent is ready to compensate for the old guard's departure

MALI will mark the end of an era for Egypt, with veteran coach Mahmoud Al-Gohari set to retire at the end of the tournament and the likes of Hossam Hassan and Hani Ramzy likely to exit the international stage.

For most countries, the loss of this talented trio would be akin to a mortal blow, but Egyptian football has an exciting new generation of players coming through the ranks, led by teenage striker Ahmed Hossam. There will be much attention on the Ajax striker as he emerges as an African superstar of the future.

Focus of attention...Ahmed Hossam

Popperfoto

Hossam has an experienced and talented supporting cast, with a good many of the players veterans of Egypt's 1998 Nations Cup triumph in Burkina Faso. These include the much under-rated midfield workhorse Ahmed Hassan and defender Abdelzaher El Saqqa, who both play their club football in Turkey.

Goalkeeper Nader El Sayed has returned to Egypt from Belgium in a bid to keep his place as first choice. Al-Gohari, who is in his third spell as coach and took Egypt to the 1990 World Cup finals, is also likely to include one or two players from the Under-20 side which finished third at last year's World Youth Cup in Argentina.

Failure to qualify for the World Cup finals has hastened the coach's departure, though he was asked to stay on for the Nations Cup finals.

Egypt have been dealt a difficult opening round group but have a chance for revenge against Senegal, who pipped them to a place in Japan and South Korea.

The Pharaohs have a strong all-round team with few weaknesses, save for the perennial problem of self-doubt, which was their undoing in Nigeria two years ago.

WHAT THEY SAY

Mahmoud Al-Gohari

"We are confident of doing well in Mali but also aware that we will be playing against some good teams."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Tarek El Said

05.04.78. Anderlecht (Blg).

Midfielder El Said was on Zamalek's books from the age of 11, making his senior debut at 18. First called up by Egypt for a friendly against Zambia three years later, he went with the squad to the Nations Cup in Nigeria. He joined Anderlecht last summer after helping Zamalek win the African Cup-winners Cup. His cultured left foot has earned him the nickname 'the Egyptian Rivaldo'.

SENEGAL

Pressure to perform

World Cup qualification was a fairytale – now expectations are much higher

THE pressure is on Senegal to reproduce the form that secured them their first World Cup finals place in the middle of last year.

The Lions from West Africa were the fairytale story of 2001, but the Nations Cup finals will give an indication of whether they are for real. On paper, at least, Senegal have a formidable squad, almost exclusively drawn from clubs in Europe. Lens striker El Hadji Ousseynou Diouf, who scored vital goals in their World Cup and Nations Cup qualifying campaigns, is one of the three candidates for the 2001 African Footballer of the Year award (to be announced in April) and will lead the attack.

Flying...but Senegal face a tough test

In-form forward Fary Faye is also in contention for a starting place on the back of his goalscoring exploits for Beira Mar in Portugal.

Khalilou Fadiga and Henri Camara, both based in France, provide formidable attacking support, while the defence and midfield are also packed with quality players, including captain Aliou Cisse of Paris Saint-Germain.

Coach Bruno Metsu, also from France, has engendered a strong team spirit, and there will be plenty of competition for places in the side in Mali, particularly with the World Cup finals on the horizon.

Senegal have never won a Nations Cup title or even reached the Final – their best placing was fourth in the 1990 edition held in Algeria. As hosts in 1992 they reached the quarter-finals, and two years ago were minutes away from knocking out hosts Nigeria in the last eight, only to lose in extra-time.

This time their ambitions are sure to be set a lot higher, but they are going to be marked men in a tough opening round group.

WHAT THEY SAY

Bruno Metsu

"This is a side with a phenomenal team spirit and a willingness to win. These players have the capability of creating great things for Senegal."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Henri Camara

10.05.77. Sedan (Fra).

Winger Camara starred at the last Nations Cup but had to wait for his chance in Europe. He joined Strasbourg from Diaraf Dakar in 1999 but could not get a game because there were too many non-European Union players in the squad. A loan spell at Neuchatel Xamax in Switzerland led to a move to Grasshopper, with whom he won the Swiss League. He switched to Sedan last summer.

TUNISIA

So solid crew

New coach Michel can rely on the team's midfield and defensive strengths

FRENCH coach Henri Michel returns to the Nations Cup finals at the helm of the team who cost him his job two years ago. Michel was fired by Morocco after defeat by Tunisia at the 2000 finals denied them a quarter-final berth.

Now the former French international is back having been appointed in November, primarily with the World Cup in mind. The Nations Cup is something of an introductory exercise, but Tunisia have been scrambling to allow him time to work with the players before Mali to ensure a creditable performance.

However, Michel has already run into trouble, having banned Germany-based striker Adel Sellimi from the squad for refusing to play in a friendly in Spain just after Christmas. Sellimi would have been an important cog in the side, where form strikers are in short supply. Ali Zitouni is out with injury, and Tunisia's firepower in no way matches their prowess in midfield and defence.

In trouble...Adel Sellimi

Luckily for Michel, there is a solid foundation to the side, with many experienced players to call on. The recent mass exodus of Tunisian players to European clubs must be a bonus, too, and the country has also rushed through the naturalisation of Brazilian midfielder Adailton. He is a key member of the Esperance side who have dominated African club soccer in recent years. Adailton made his debut in a friendly against Togo in late November and is expected to be one of the starting XI in Mali.

Goalkeeper Chokri El Ouaer returns for his fifth successive finals and will captain the side at the end of a one-year ban from African club competition for trying to fake an injury in the 2000 Champions League Final. Other veterans include Zoubier Baya, Kais Ghodbane and Raouf Bouzaiene.

WHAT THEY SAY

Henri Michel

"We have an intensive programme of preparation to try to put together a solid showing at the Nations Cup. But the World Cup remains our priority."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Khaled Badra

08.04.73. Genoa (Ita).

Milan were recently interested in adding the burly Tunisian defender to their roster, an indication of the talent that lies in Tunisia's back four. Badra, who played at the last World Cup finals, has come to the fore in recent months after joining former Tunisia coach Francesco Scoglio at Genoa in Italy's Serie B. The defender was a member of the Under-23 side that went to the Atlanta Olympics.

ZAMBIA

Up against it

The southern Africans have been in decline and are lacking preparation

Happy days...but Zambia have much work to do to restore their fading image

ZAMBIA'S preparations were thrown into disarray in September when Dutch coach Jan Brouwer received a one-year ban from the Confederation of African Football for allegedly attempting to attack the referee after his side qualified for the finals with a hard-fought win in Madagascar in June.

The appeal process, which was unsuccessful, cost more time, and then dithering by the Zambian federation and the threat of legal action from Brouwer ensured no replacement was named until six weeks before the Nations Cup finals.

New Danish incumbent Roald Poulsen has, therefore, had little time to prepare for a tournament at which Zambia are hoping to restore their fading image.

Beaten finalists in 1974 and 1994, they have been to the last six Nations Cup finals, but always with the inspirational Kalusha Bwalya to back up their chances. Now the former African Footballer of the Year has retired there is a major void in Zambia's line-up, and the team have been in steady decline in recent years.

The lack of a recognised striker has been the primary cause of the downturn, with Dennis Lota unable to reproduce the goalscoring form he showed at the start of his international career almost a decade ago.

However, Poulsen did promise to bring back most of the overseas-based players ignored during the reign of Brouwer. The Dutchman fell out with Koln pair Moses Sichone and Andrew Sinkala, and ignored Denmark-based duo Mwape Miti and Andrew Tembo.

WHAT THEY SAY

Roald Poulsen

"It's imperative that all Zambian players, irrespective of where they are based, are given a chance to compete for places. We must try to bury past differences."

KEEP AN EYE ON

Moses Sichone

31.05.77. Koln (Ger).

The lanky defender was captain of Zambia until he moved to Germany, where he won accolades in helping Koln win promotion. Sichone kept his form in the top flight, but played only once for Zambia last year, a World Cup qualifying defeat in Togo, after which former coach Jan Brouwer described him as disruptive. Sichone will be a steadying influence on a defence likely to be kept busy in Mali.

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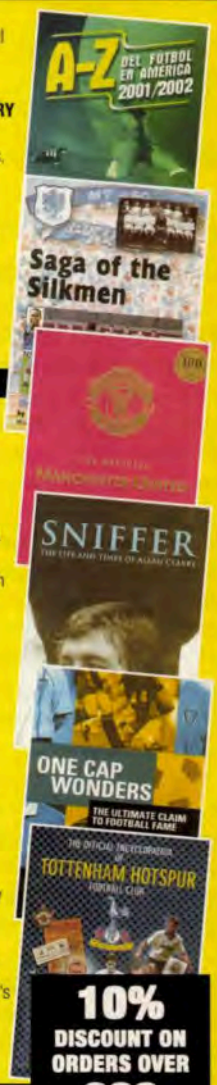

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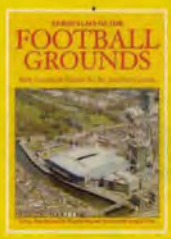

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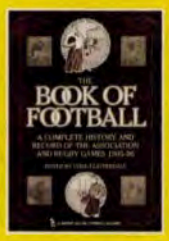

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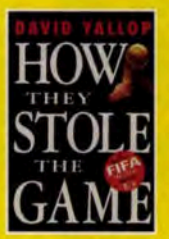

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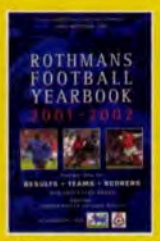

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Against the odds

Keir Radnedge hails two forwards who have succeeded despite major setbacks

DARIO HUBNER

The Bison bites back

THE 'Bosman law' has turned most club squads into such cosmopolitan mixtures that it was no surprise when newspapers and magazines began referring to Dario Hubner as a 'Germany-born Italian'.

In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Serie A's surprise leading scorer is Italian through and through. It's just that his family come from Trieste, up in the north-eastern corner of Italy with its historical links to the Habsburg empire.

Had any other Italian scored a dozen goals in the opening 12 rounds of the Serie A season, outstripping the likes of Argentina's Hernan Crespo and Ukraine's Andrii Shevchenko (not to mention Italy's own Roberto Baggio, Christian Vieri and Alex Del Piero), then he would be hailed a certain candidate for World Cup superstardom.

Not Hubner, nicknamed The Bison for his bulk and power. For one thing, he plays for unfashionable, provincial Piacenza. For another, this is only his third season in Serie A. For yet another, he is 34 years of age. Also, he cost Piacenza only £1.5million last summer and that hardly ranks him alongside the high-cost superstars vying to catch the eye of national team coach Giovanni Trapattoni.

"The World Cup? That's a very pretty dream," says Hubner. "Honestly, who knows? To be realistic, it's highly unlikely. But stranger things have happened. If I go on scoring goals as I have then maybe I might get a chance. But it's a big 'maybe'. I have learnt down the years that nothing in football comes easily.

"Last season, for instance, when I was playing for Brescia, I scored a hat-trick against Udinese at the start of the season, and everyone wanted to know me. Then, after a few weeks without any more goals, everyone had forgotten me. It was as if I didn't exist."

Hubner's background in the game is astonishingly modest, while the forward has shown great perseverance and faith in his abilities. He started right down in Serie C2 with minnow clubs Pergocrema and Fano.

'Me at the World Cup? It's highly unlikely, but stranger things have happened'

Hubner earned promotion to the second division equivalent, Serie C1, with the latter; and his top-scoring 13 goals for Fano in 1991-92 earned him a further step up the ladder – this time with Cesena in Serie B.

Cesena were a club with Serie A ambitions, having tasted life in the top flight, albeit briefly. However, they lacked the necessary finance. Hubner spent five seasons there, scoring 74 League goals and another eight in the Italian Cup. His physical strength – despite a back problem – and cool temper meant he missed very few matches through either injury or suspension. That consistency, in turn, caught the eye of Brescia, who had beaten Cesena to gain promotion to Serie A.

Consistent scorer...Dario Hubner

Thus, on August 31, 1997, at the ripe old (footballing) age of 30, Hubner made his long-awaited debut in the Italian top flight. His presence went largely unnoticed since a somewhat more famous centre-forward was making his own debut for opponents Internazionale: Ronaldo. Yet, funnily enough, it was Hubner who marked the occasion by scoring and the Brazilian who went goalless. Brescia lost 2-1, however. It set the pattern for the campaign: Hubner scored consistently but Brescia lost consistently. He ended the term with 16 goals in 30 matches but the club were relegated.

That promised to be the beginning and end of Hubner's career in Serie A. But he proved as prolific a marksman as ever in Serie B, scoring 21 goals in each of the next two seasons to shoot Brescia back up to the top flight. Last term he top-scored with 17 goals in 24 games – only to be rewarded with a place on the transfer list.

Hubner took the decision phlegmatically, saying: "The coach felt a different sort of centre-forward was needed to play alongside Roberto Baggio. It was disappointing but I could understand it. They signed some other attackers so it was obvious they were looking to the future and I wouldn't get many games. Moving on made sense."

Signing him for a mere £1.5m has certainly made sense for promoted Piacenza, their ambition limited to nothing more basic than survival in Serie A. Two-goal hauls in successive matches against Chievo, Torino and Parma edged him to the top of the national goalscorers' chart and raised questions about why no grander club had ever pursued him.

"There have been whispers every now and again," says Hubner. "When I was at Cesena there was some interest from Inter but it never came to anything."

Torino, Parma, Roma, Verona and Chelsea were reported to have considered a bid during the summer then decided that he was too old for the job.

Their loss, Piacenza's gain.

DIEGO TRISTAN

Depor's late developer

DIEGO TRISTAN'S goals are firing Deportivo La Coruna in pursuit of both the Champions League and the Spanish championship. Not bad for a player who was twice snubbed as a no-hoper by Real Madrid.

Tristan, born January 5, 1976, always names Argentina's Diego Maradona and Spain's 1986 World Cup hero Emilio Butragueno when asked to reveal his boyhood idols. However, there was not much chance that he could emulate their particular style since he grew up strong and lanky – about six inches taller than either of his heroes.

Unlike Maradona and Butragueno, both teenage revelations, Tristan has been a late developer. He turned professional as a 19-year-old with Betis of Seville, and 11 goals in the Second Division for their nursery team in the 1997-98 season drew covetous glances from Real Madrid. However, he also developed a reputation for enjoying life off the pitch as much as on it. Thus Madrid's then sports director Jose Pirri – a European Cup winner in 1966 – went to spy on Tristan and was not impressed.

"A player with his sort of lifestyle isn't for us," said Pirri, so Tristan was sold to Mallorca, instead.

The goals kept flowing, however. In the next two seasons Tristan rattled home 34 for Mallorca and their reserves, and Madrid changed their mind in the spring of 2000. Lorenzo Sanz, president of Madrid, duly agreed terms with Betis for Tristan, whose attacking talent he hoped to add to that of Raul Gonzalez and Fernando Morientes.

But completion of the transfer was delayed because Sanz faced a presidential election within the Madrid club. Amazingly, even though Madrid had just won the Champions League, Sanz was ousted by property developer Florentino Perez.

The accession to power of Perez has proved sensational. Twice he has broken the world transfer record, first splashing £37million on Luis Figo, then £47m on Zinedine Zidane. Perez has also masterminded the property deal that has turned Madrid finances upside down – they are heading for solvency after being £265m in debt less than a year ago.

Message to Madrid...each goal Diego Tristan scores reminds the Bernabeu side of what they might have had

The Perez phenomenon proved wonderful for everyone – except Tristan. Perez lured presidential votes by promising to buy Figo from Barcelona and proved as good as his word. As for Tristan, however, the label of being a 'Sanz man' was enough to prompt Perez to pull the plug on the proposed deal. That infuriated not only Tristan but also Mallorca, who had already spent the £11m they expected to receive for him. Tristan had to be sold, if not to Madrid then to someone else. On the eve of the 2000-01 season, champions Deportivo La Coruna snapped him up for a cut-price £8m.

Depor coach Javier Irureta appeared spoiled for choice in attack between Tristan, Holland's Roy Makaay and Uruguayan Walter Pandiani. Tristan was expected to be the stand-in, but it did not work out that way. He cracked 19 goals in 22 starts and ended the season as Depor's top scorer. Oddly, 16 of his goals were scored in Depor's Riazor stadium, with the other three coming in one away match, in Oviedo.

'The ups and downs in my career have made me more determined to make the best of myself'

That was one of three hat-tricks that helped earn Tristan promotion into Spain's national squad. Coincidentally, it was also in Oviedo that Tristan marked his Spain debut with a goal, in a 4-1 win over Bosnia-Herzegovina in a World Cup qualifier. In the Champions League, Tristan added to his tally as Depor reached the quarter-finals before bowing out to Leeds. They lost 3-0 at Elland Road then won 2-0 at home; Tristan scored their second goal but it was not quite enough.

Tristan has continued rattling home the goals this season and is Depor's leading scorer. Each goal has carried a message to Madrid.

He says: "I have had to cope with ups and downs all through my career, at Betis and then at Mallorca. I don't worry about it now but it made me more determined to make the best of myself. If that determination takes me to the World Cup finals so much the better."

Passion play...the fans give Lens tremendous home support

Coal, blood and gold

The gritty northern French side have hit a rich vein of form under coach Joel Muller, says Nick Bidwell

FANS of French championship pacesetters Racing Club de Lens would no doubt subscribe to the view that some coaching faces fit and others simply do not. Rolland Courbis was not the man for them last season; current boss Joel Muller definitely is.

When Courbis was handed the first-team reins in June 2000, the universal reaction was one of astonishment. Yes, he had a good track record at Toulon, Bordeaux and Marseille. But this seemed an ill-conceived union of a volatile, flamboyant Mediterranean man and unpretentious Lens, a club of deep-rooted workmanlike values based in the old coalmining region of north-east France.

The 40,000 Lens supporters, whose passion and vocal encouragement gives their Stade Bollaert home an English Premiership feel, are renowned for their sportsmanship. But they were to exhibit little sense of fair play as far as Courbis was concerned. The fans remembered only too well how Courbis had often made fun of them, famously describing them as 'penguins' and their town as the 'North Pole', while his lack of results once he had taken the helm meant their glacial feelings towards him never thawed.

Instead of pushing for the minimum objective of a top-six League finish, Courbis' disjointed, poorly motivated side went from setback to setback. The coach finally threw in the towel last February following five straight defeats, leaving caretaker Georges Tournay to steer the club just clear of relegation.

Lens president Gervais Martel had gambled and lost on Courbis, but at least he had learnt his lesson. Next time around, he put man-management skills and low-key efficiency at the top of his requirements for the new coach, and, with that in mind, pounced on the well-regarded Muller.

Unlike Courbis, Muller was never likely to feel a stranger in a strange land at Lens. He used to play at nearby Dunkerque and after coaching Metz for 11 years, knew all about battling the odds to turn a small-town northern club into a competitive outfit.

And how quickly he was to make his mark with the Lens 'Sang et Or' (Blood and Golds). Pre-season training was as intense as anyone at the club could remember, he drummed traditional *Lensois* virtues of teamwork, discipline and attacking daring-do into his players at every turn, and forged a tight-knit squad in double-quick time.

The once-grim dressing-room atmosphere lightened at a stroke, and Lens started the new season in a blaze of purposeful play and commitment. They lost only two of their opening 16 League games and claimed top spot at the mid-way point of the campaign.

"Our team is very much built in the image of our coach," says central defender Valerien Ismael. He had been declared *persona non grata* by Courbis and gone on loan to Strasbourg mid-way through last season, only to return and become an integral part of Muller's plans. "He's very demanding and rigorous and has created a good working atmosphere for us. Under him, everyone is pulling in the same direction.

"He's very calm and clever psychologically. He has the right words for each situation. He knows how to handle a squad of professionals. Joel is very honest. There are no hidden sides to him. We can discuss matters openly with him. There aren't many in football with his sort of human qualities."

Lens certainly have much going for them. Their front line of rising Senegalese star El Hadji Diouf and French Under-21 cap Daniel Moreira is an explosive amalgam of craft, power and speed, while left-sided midfield creator Stephane Pedron has been in the form of his life since arriving last summer from relegated Saint-Etienne. The defence is solid and within their ranks is the same sort of defiant spirit that recently transformed neighbours Lille from Second Division makeweights to Champions League participants.

Comparative statistics should also encourage the *Lensois*. After 17 games of this season, they had seven points more than at the same stage in 1997-98, when they went on to win their one and only French League crown. Back then, they came from behind in the championship race, embarking on a run

of seven wins in their last eight matches and pipping Muller's Metz to the title. This time, Lens are leading the pack and it is they who must guard against the sprint finish of the likes of Lyon, Lille and Auxerre.

"The title of autumn champions is no use to anyone," says midfielder Jocelyn Blanchard. "All that matters is to be top after 34 games. The hard work starts now. Every opponent will be waiting to ambush us. They will all want to beat the leaders."

Muller preaches similar caution, saying: "Of course, it's not unpleasant to be at the top of the table. Many clubs would like to be in our shoes. But it remains to be seen whether we can maintain the good form we have shown in the first few months.

"We mustn't dream too much. Don't forget the problems Lens had just six months ago. Our goal is not the title. We never mention it. A place in the top five is the real aim, and as long as we stay solid, united and don't do anything stupid, we can achieve European qualification. On the other hand, if some of our players start thinking of themselves rather than the team, we'll be in trouble."

Power and pace...El Hadji Diouf

'Our team is built in the image of our coach. Joel Muller is very demanding and rigorous'

defender Valerien Ismael

Needless to say, some will claim Muller is only playing mind games. But, conversely, he does have his reasons for damping down expectations. Not only will his Senegalese trio of defender Ferdinand Coly, midfielder Pape Sarr and Diouf be absent for a substantial period because of African Nations Cup commitments, but also Moreira has been struggling with a knee injury recently.

After three years of underachievement in the playmaker role or on the right wing, Moreira was switched to the front line at the start of the season. He has been a revelation, stylishly putting away a high percentage of chances and utilising his vision and technical prowess to link well with the multi-talented Diouf.

"I think we're doing well at the moment because both the coach and the players here are motivated by a spirit of revenge," says Moreira. "Many of us are keen to make up for the disappointments of last season. Joel Muller was sacked by Metz, Lens nearly went down and Pape Sarr, Jean-Guy Walemme and Stephane Pedron were relegated with Saint-Etienne before joining us. We are not exceptional. It's thanks to our great team spirit that we've got where we are."

Football in Lens has always had strong associations with the local coal industry. Founded in 1906, the team was exclusively made up of men from the pit in its early days, and it was the mining company that bankrolled the club's move to the French professional ranks in 1934.

No fans were more passionate than the miners who crammed the terraces of Lens' first ground, La Glissoire (The Slide) and subsequent home, the Stade Felix Bollaert – named after the mine owner who financed its construction in the early 1930s. However, the crowds could also be ruthless, shouting "A la mine" (Down the mine) to any underperforming player.

For many years, the sons of Polish immigrant miners formed the backbone of the team, and star players such as French international forwards Maryan Wisnieski and 'Theo' Skudlapski helped the club achieve their first real successes – back-to-back First Division runners-up spots in 1955-56 and 1956-57.

A severe lack of cash-flow caused Lens to quit the professional game in 1969, but it was to prove only a temporary blip. Four years later, they were back in the top flight as full-timers and in 1976-77 the team finished a fine second to Nantes.

Right at home...Joel Muller fitted in immediately

The following season, Lens produced one of their best ever displays, hammering Lazio 6-0 in a second round UEFA Cup tie, but it was to be all downhill from there, with a team featuring French international left winger Didier Six somehow contriving to be relegated to the Second Division.

Although Lens did win promotion at the first attempt, it was not until a certain former English teacher by the name of Gerard Houllier arrived as coach in 1982 that they really began to develop into a national force again.

With elegant playmaker Philippe Vercruysse pulling the strings in midfield and striker Daniel Xuereb snapping up the chances, Houllier's Lens finished a creditable fourth in the French League of 1982-83, thus qualifying for Europe for the first time in seven years.

Come the end of this season, Houllier could have double cause for celebration: League titles for present club Liverpool and his old friends at Lens.

● *Squad pen pics are over the page.*

THE COACH
Joel MULLER

Born: 02.01.52
Spent 11 years in charge of Metz, winning the 1996 League Cup and taking the League runners-up spot in 1997-98. But he was sacked after the team's poor start to last season. Joined Lens six months later. Played as a central defender for Sedan, Metz, Nice, Lyon and Dunkerque.

GOALKEEPERS
Sebastien CHABBERT

15.05.78
The promising ex-Cannes keeper was told he would be Courbis' first-choice on the eve of last season. But he injured a knee before the League kicked off and was then kept out by Warmuz's fine form. Loaned to Metz last term.

Ever-present...Warmuz

Guillaume WARMUZ

22.05.70
Has not missed a First Division game for Lens since the 1996-97 season. Very consistent, unflappable, courageous and with great reflexes, he might have won full caps if Lama and Barthez had not been around. Formerly with Marseille and Louhans-Cuiseaux before joining Lens in 1992.

DEFENDERS
Jacek BAK (Pol)

24.03.73
Consistent and versatile Polish international – he can play full-back, sweeper, stopper or as a defensive midfielder – who joined Lens on loan from Lyon just before Christmas. Was a regular for five seasons at Lyon after joining from Lech Poznan in 1995. However, he was unable to regain his place after being sidelined by a back injury.

Ferdinand COLY (Sen)

10.09.73
A centre-back for Senegal, but plays at stopper, full-back or in a midfield holding role at Lens. Has plenty of aggression and boundless stamina. Arrived at Lens from Chateauroux in summer 1999.

Adama COULIBALY (Mli)

09.10.80
Young Malien central defender who joined Lens from Djoliba Bamako in summer 1999. Plagued by injuries at first, but is now fit and a regular starter. Powerful and good on the ball, though concentration can lapse.

Valerien ISMAEL

28.09.75
Former Under-21 centre-back who went on loan to Strasbourg last term after being overlooked by Courbis. Won the French Cup with them and was handed a pivotal role by Muller on his return to Lens. Robust marker, has aerial ability and gets goals from set-pieces. Also had a spell at Crystal Palace.

Yoan LACHOR

17.01.76
Left-back who earned a place in Lens folklore by scoring the goal that clinched them the French title in 1997-98. Tackles well, is quick and supports the attack intelligently. Lacks confidence, however. Had loan spell at Servette last term.

Eric SIKORA

04.02.68
Arrived at Lens as a 12-year-old in 1980 and has spent his entire professional career diligently serving the team from right-back. Former French Under-21.

Djimi TRAORE

01.03.80
Moved to Lens on loan early this season after failing to win a regular spot in the Liverpool back four. Still not a first-choice back in France, but the tall French Under-21 star is a classy performer who can play at left-back or in central defence. Formerly with Laval.

Jean-Guy WALEMME

10.08.67
Team captain and central defensive brains who stunned Lens fans by opting to leave his club of 14 years after winning the League in 1998. However, he failed to settle with Coventry and then suffered two top-flight relegations back in France – with Sochaux and Saint-Etienne. Came back to Lens last summer.

MIDFIELDERS
Radek BEJBL (Cze)

29.08.72
Czech international midfield grafter who has been sidelined by a thigh injury this season. Tackles and chases relentlessly, passes well and has a good tactical sense. Joined Lens from Atletico Madrid in 2000.

Jocelyn BLANCHARD

28.05.72
Locally-born central or right-sided midfielder who slipped the Lens scouting net, making a name for himself at Dunkerque and then Metz. Moved to Juventus in July 1998, only to spend the season on the bench. Joined Lens after that. Boasts a powerful shot and is a fine ball-winner, though he needs to be more adventurous with his passing.

Hot shot...Blanchard

Charles-Edouard CORIDON

09.04.73
Tall, Martinique-born attacking midfielder who can play on either flank. Good vision and pace. Joined Lens from Guingamp in 1999.

Mickael DEBEVE

01.12.70
Gritty right-sided midfielder who is a favourite with the fans despite his status as a reserve. Debeve has never stopped toiling since arriving at Lens from Toulouse in 1994.

Front-runner...Moreira

Daniel MOREIRA

08.08.77
A Frenchman of Portuguese extraction, he was touted as one of the country's brightest playmaking prospects while at first club Guingamp. However, he lost his way after his 1998 move to Lens. Now back on track, though, after coach Muller decided to move him up front from a playmaker or right-wing role.

Stephane PEDRON

22.02.71
Brilliant left-sided midfielder and well worth the £1.8million Lens paid Saint-Etienne for him last summer. Known as 'Flea' because of his light build, but even so he is a devastating attacking weapon, a quick thinker, superb passer and dead-ball expert. Was not a professional until 23, when he signed for Second Division Laval.

Pape SARR (Sen)

07.12.77
Another to join Lens from Saint-Etienne and has settled in well. The Senegalese international has a sure touch, bundles of energy and can operate equally proficiently in central midfield or out on the left.

FORWARDS
Mathieu BUCHER

21.11.82
Exciting young attacking understudy. The French Under-18 international is the son of the Lens club doctor, but his talent means any accusations of nepotism are groundless.

El Hadji DIOUF (Sen)

15.01.81
Senegalese international who has all the attributes to be the next African superstar: explosive finishing, dribbling tricks, pace and supreme self-confidence. However, he does lack discipline. While at Rennes, he was involved in a serious car crash and after he was found to be without a valid licence, the club sent him on loan to Lens at the start of last season. This led to a permanent deal.

Bruno RODRIGUEZ

25.11.72
Corsica-born front man who is reminiscent of Carsten Jancker, though with a touch more technical ability. Recently returned to Lens after a loan spell with Rayo Vallecano failed to work out. Sadly, his best days are behind him.

Major talent...Sakho

Lamine SAKHO

28.09.77
The star of this French Under-21 front-runner has waned a little since Diouf and Moreira began to click up front. Yet he remains a major talent. Quick and a sinuous dribbler, he arrived from Nimes in 1999.

Antoine SIBIERSKI

05.08.74
A playmaker or pure forward, he has few peers in terms of creativity or finishing ability. However, he has lacked consistency throughout his career. Previously at Lille, Auxerre and Nantes.

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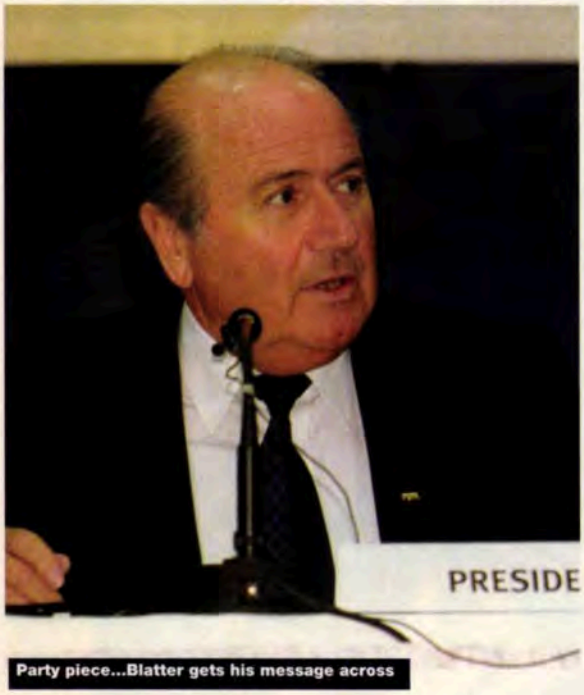
Keir Radnedge
COMMENTARY

Blatter stakes his claim

Whisper it quietly...the FIFA president is ready to run for another term



Party piece...Blatter gets his message across

SEPP BLATTER, after all the speculation and despite the most turbulent year yet, is ready to stand for a second term as FIFA president.

Decision day will be FIFA Congress on May 29 in Seoul, 48 hours before the opening match of the World Cup finals between France and Senegal. It's reported from South Korea that their federation president, Chung Mong-joon, will also stand. But the way Blatter tells it, he believes he has half the votes already.

"More than 100 national associations have asked me – not informally but in writing – to stand again," Blatter told a special one-man conference session at Football Expo, the game's major trade show, in Cannes. "If the national associations want me to continue my work then I can announce that I am ready to do so."

Politics and semantics being what they are, Blatter was quick to refute questioners' assertions that he was an official candidate. Official status is attainable only a maximum of two months before Congress. Also, Blatter will have remembered how he was forced to step aside from his role of general secretary four years ago after declaring his challenge to Lennart Johansson for the succession to Joao Havelange. Thus Blatter will maintain absolute and uncompromised command of the levers of power as long as he can.

> 'More than 100 national associations have asked me to stand again. If they're willing to vote for me then I'm willing to work on with them'
>
> *Sepp Blatter*

That said, there was no room for doubt after watching him at his most presidential in Cannes that this was his de facto manifesto launch. He reeled off the achievements – FIFA's development projects (always good for votes), improvements in refereeing standards through professionalism, a worldwide levelling up of playing standards (as demonstrated by two successive African Olympic Games winners), a junior world championship for women, plus a partnership with television that has achieved as much for TV as it has for football.

Blatter said: "They bring along the cameras and, in return, we offer live theatre at its best. No one knows the ending and we also offer emotion, passion and sound effects."

Then there was the unified international calendar, for which the 2002 African Nations Cup was the first test in pursuit of ending those tedious club v country squabbles (Blatter also came as close as he probably dared to blaming France – and their blinkered insistence on taking their full squad to Australia for that notorious November friendly – for the decision to deny future World Cup holders the right to direct access to the finals).

Revamped transfer regulations, rotation of the World Cup (starting with Africa in 2010) and a string of partnerships for various humanitarian and charitable programmes all added up to a proud list.

Blatter said: "Everything is great – the best of all possible worlds."

But that, as he conceded, was before a cataclysmic 2001. The collapse of ISL, FIFA's long-term marketing partner, was the first hammer blow. The quickly formulated creation of FIFA Marketing plus Blatter's own nimble footwork at the extraordinary congress in Buenos Aires brought FIFA through. But then came September 11 – "a shattering event for the world as a whole with shattering consequences, obviously among so many other things, for world sport".

One consequence was heightened security concerns, which provoked AXA into cancelling FIFA's World Cup insurance. Blatter did not put it quite as bluntly as this but, in effect, without the World Cup every four years, FIFA's bank account would be not merely empty but deep in the red. Of course, a new insurance policy was put in place with enough financing to carry FIFA through its 'gap' year and support the costs of a hugely expensive World Cup. Blatter will, of course, take the credit.

So now what? It seems the past year's events have been quite enough even for the world game's Mr Perpetual Motion. He said: "We must give the game time to take stock – and that goes also for our social, cultural and commercial partners."

Clever stuff. The prospects are a fall in revenue from TV rights and uncertainties even over the future ownership and/or direction of World Cup rights controller Kirch. Blatter dare not promise new spending programmes – and he knows that any rival who promises as much cannot be credible.

Why, then, bother changing the leader?, was the barely hidden subtext. Blatter said: "If, on May 29 in Seoul, all these national associations who have written to me are willing to vote for me then I am willing to work on with them, for them, to maintain their trust."

● Expect Michel Platini to step down as FIFA presidential counsellor after the World Cup, even if Blatter is re-elected. Platini has grown increasingly frustrated by the restrictions of an office without power. He will stand, instead, for the place on UEFA's executive being vacated for him by Claude Simonet. Then, in two years, when Lennart Johansson retires as UEFA president, Platini would be in pole position to run for the succession.

The name game

Ben Hamilton on a radical solution to the problem of escalating costs

THE YEAR IS 2044. Sky United are playing the Toyota Tomahawks in the World Club Championship Final. Following allegations of bias regarding the interactive coverage of United's semi-final defeat of Nestle Athletic by the winning club's parent company, BSkyB, the worldwide broadcast rights have been handed over to a rival. But BSkyB is not complaining; its club's domination of the continental league for the past decade has established it as the world's leading broadcaster.

An unlikely scenario? Perhaps not. As clubs continue to look for more ways of generating revenue to tackle the problem of escalating players' wages, more and more have sold the naming rights to their stadiums. Initially unpopular with fans, it is becoming more and more acceptable as an intelligent way of generating capital.

Although the majority involved are newly built, it is inevitable that clubs will soon start re-naming their current stadiums. In Germany, Hamburg's Volkparkstadion has been re-named the AOL stadium until 2006. Tottenham Hotspur's owner, ENIC, is reported to be considering a similar deal for White Hart Lane. If the money from such a deal ends up delivering silverware, it is unlikely that many fans will object.

But could the same be said about the naming rights to the club themselves?

In Asia it is commonplace for companies to own clubs outright and to name the clubs after themselves. In countries such as Korea (first national league founded in 1983) and China (founded in 1994), the ownership of clubs is restricted to large corporations, after which the clubs are named.

With secure backing, many of the financial problems that affect western football clubs – particularly player-related costs – are alien to these leagues. If a company is experiencing financial problems, a new company will replace it. For example, in 1999, with its parent company Daewoo on the brink of collapse as a result of the Far East Asia economic slump, Korean club Daewoo Pusan Royals became Hyundai Pusan Icons. Chinese outfit Dalian Wanda became Dalian Shide in 1999 after Wanda encountered similar financial difficulties.

Money talks...Chinese club Dalian Shide, in blue, have benefited from being owned by a large corporation

However, while western clubs are longer established and more likely to have evolved from humble beginnings into an outfit that is either owned by its members or a wealthy family, the creation of clubs in China and Korea happened quickly, coinciding with the establishment of a national league and the professionalisation of the game. There were, therefore, no traditional barriers to overcome.

Perhaps it is this sentimentality that is holding the game back. Although Manchester United consistently make profits while enjoying success on the pitch, most of their main rivals in the English Premier League and European Champions League do not. The ongoing struggle of Fiorentina, a Serie A club with a proud history and strong brand, to find a backer to avoid going out of existence is testament to the seriousness of the situation.

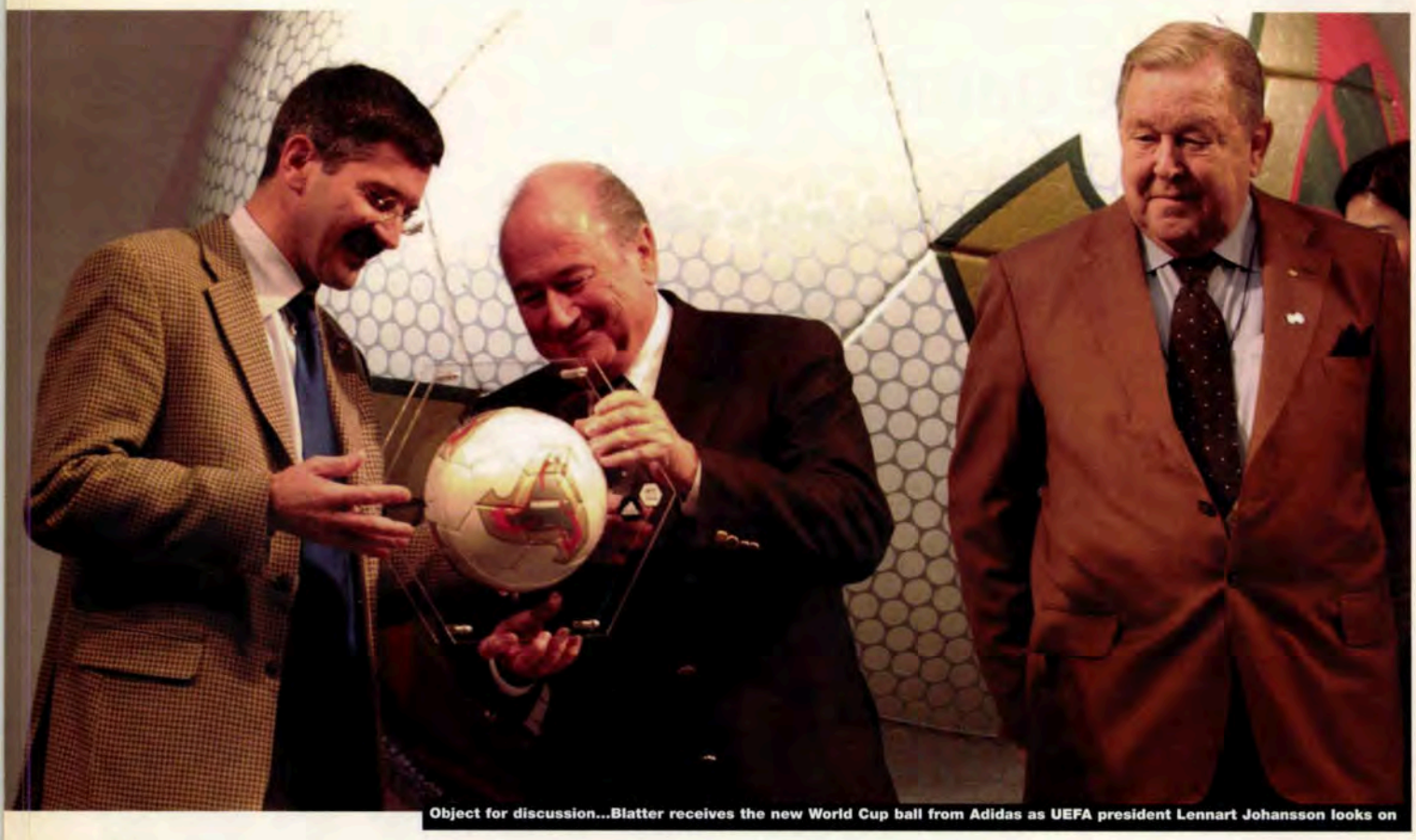
'More and more clubs have sold the naming rights to their stadiums...if the money from such a deal ends up delivering silverware, it is unlikely many fans will object'

Investors are turning away from football clubs because of the rising costs, notably from wages. In 1997, the year before BSkyB bid for United, the football sector was the stock market darling. Ten British clubs floated, all of them at full subscription. However, since then shares in football clubs have plummeted. United shares are now trading at barely 30 per cent of their early 2000 price. More than 50 per cent of the class of '97 are trading at less than 25 per cent of their issue price and some are trading at less than 10 per cent.

Wage-capping and the system proposed by the G-14 group of top European clubs, under which clubs will be allowed to pay players only a limited percentage of their turnover, could be challenged in the courts.

In the long term, widespread ownership reform, along the lines of clubs in Asia, may be the only antidote to cure western football of its financial afflictions.

Ben Hamilton writes for Soccer Investor (www.soccerinvestor.com)



Object for discussion...Blatter receives the new World Cup ball from Adidas as UEFA president Lennart Johansson looks on

Sepp Blatter sets the pace at FIFA in more ways than one. Keir Radnedge tried to keep up with the president of world football's governing body the day before the World Cup draw in Busan

A day in the life of...Sepp Blatter

YOU have to get up very, very early to catch Sepp Blatter out. That's why no one has managed it for quite some time. Up at six, in the office by seven – whether in his FIFA House fiefdom in Zurich or on the road in Busan's Paradise Hotel.

"I have an automatic body clock, wherever I am," he says as he stands over his desk in a makeshift office. A picture window overlooks the sun-speckled East Sea but Blatter does not spare it a glance. His focus is on "tidying together" the paperwork for what promises to be a complex meeting of FIFA's executive committee.

Blatter's critics grumble about his construction of a 'kitchen cabinet' with various advisers and assistants, of whom Michel Platini has the highest public profile. But then, predecessor Joao Havelange had his own office, too. The difference is that Havelange's personal office was out of sight in Rio de Janeiro, whereas Blatter, naturally, works out of FIFA House in Zurich and takes his mobile office and its staff on his many and tireless travels. He lives 15 minutes from FIFA House. You wonder, perhaps, if he doesn't live too close to the shop.

Blatter is a demanding boss but he does not demand anything wildly beyond the pace he sets for himself. In terms of workrate, he leads from the front – proving the point in Busan by accelerating out of the door, through the corridor, round the corner and into the lift with half his entourage left behind and obliged to take the next one down.

Platini is among the stragglers, joking: "It's for security. We never travel in the same lift."

'How are you?' handshakes are exchanged at a gallop as the Blatter cavalcade, gathering men and women like a human snowball, rolls on towards his executive committee meeting.

The Grand Ballroom is set out exactly as Blatter wants it, with a standard horseshoe of tables plus a further couple of parallel rows away to his left. This second-class seating awaits the assortment of advisers, assistants, observers and those general secretaries from the regional confederations who, unlike CONCACAF's Chuck Blazer, are not elected members of the executive.

UEFA president Lennart Johansson and Italy's Antonio Matarrese are already seated, bent ominously over their paperwork. As the rest of the committee drifts in, so Blatter walks round to greet each member individually, taking respectful personal care of the formalities.

A gaggle of photographers are permitted access before the meeting. They climb their little ladders taking pictures of any head that turns. A flurry of flashes greets the entry of Chung Mong-joon, president of the South Korean federation.

When communications director Keith Cooper shoos out the photographers it is also the signal for Blatter to take his seat. Senior vice-president Julio Grondona is on his right, general secretary Michel Zen-Ruffinen on his left. The tightly restricted, three-man top table is framed between a small FIFA flag on one side and a fair play

pennant on the other. Scotland's David Will, next in line of seniority after Grondona, is round the corner of the horseshoe to Blatter's right.

The meeting is heavy going. Blatter had been invited to break out for a reception with World Cup sponsor Hyundai but diplomacy has to bow to business. The executive halts for a subdued lunch at 1.40pm with a distinct absence of smiles and friendly words. Half the executive members take the proferred lunch in an adjacent salon; half disappear back to their rooms for whatever reasons one may only surmise. Forty minutes later Blatter shepherds his team back to the Grand Ballroom for the second half.

Elsewhere in Busan the party is coming to life. Journalists and broadcast crews from all over the world are tottering into the Bexco exhibition centre trying to secure their bearings and accreditation passes, and defy hangovers induced by gate-crashing the time zones.

The corporate 'suits' check their signboards, press releases and commercial rehearsal schedules. The English FA party assembles in the Marriott lobby wondering what trick of fate managed to drop them into the same hotel as Fleet Street's finest.

To all of this, Blatter and his executive are oblivious as they forge on through the agenda. They are beyond it but also above it. The entire circus hangs on every whim of the FIFA president and his committee.

The executive is, in one sense, part of FIFA's problem. It is democratic to a fault, an enormous fault. A 23-strong cast means it is too unwieldy to take major strategic decisions easily while members vote in blocks, protecting their own constituencies rather than promoting FIFA's superior interests.

It might help if the confederation presidents and delegates were not under hawkish scrutiny from their general secretaries behind them.

Blatter has chaired more awkward 'exco' meetings in the past 24 months than Havelange faced in all his 24 years. This one is due to break up at 3.30pm. It doesn't. Shortly after the scheduled closing time a smattering of FIFA staffers sneak out to attend to other duties. But it is another 15 minutes before the Ballroom exodus begins.

Blatter, one of the last to leave, is immediately hustled into yet another meeting room past yet another insatiable battery of photographers.

You wonder how staff members even half his age hang in there. The answer is, they don't always. Blatter knows it. Takes pride in it. The day they keep up is the day he should start to worry. He says: "I set a fast pace and I expect a lot from my staff, even though they cannot always keep up with me. I know only one pace – full speed ahead. I am restless. Impatient. Do you know why? It's because I know what needs to be done and I want to get it done.

"My staff are very good but, for example, when we have to travel to places like this, they have problems with jet-lag and the food and so on. Me? No. I am used to it because I have been doing this for a long time. It doesn't slow me down."

Korean musical chairs

This time the tables are arranged in a square. Blatter and Zen-Ruffinen sit at one. At right angles sit Chung and the Korean World Cup organising committee chairman, directly confronting their Japanese counterparts. At the table opposite Blatter and Zen-Ruffinen sit two directors of Byrom plc, which is about to be granted World Cup ticketing rights. For them, this is Christmas Day and a Lottery win all rolled into one.

A six-inch-thick file of paper sits on each table. This is the World Cup ticketing agreement. Each party has to sign it and initial the various sub-sections. The procedural formalities are explained by Jon Doviken, Zen-Ruffinen's assistant. Blatter looks at the hefty piles of paper, glances quizzically at Doviken and enquires: "...and then we have dinner at 10 o'clock?"

His joke bypasses the co-hosts' mini delegations. The sign-in begins. It's a refined, Korean variation of musical chairs. When the music ends you sign the paperwork that has stopped in front of you. Then off it goes again. Eventually it stops for the last time. Everyone has made his mark.

That's the signal for champagne all round and celebratory poses for the flash-happy photographers, first with Blatter and Zen-Ruffinen, then, quite properly, with ticketing overlord David Will brought into the picture.

Blatter is already revving up. Half-full, barely-sipped glasses of champagne are left behind in the race to reach the Bexco exhibition hall for Blatter's executive committee press conference. He is running late and the hall is at least 10 minutes distant through the traffic jams.

Blatter and his entourage pile into the official cars. Police outriders snap into the lead, flick on their blue lights and sirens and FIFA's finest sweeps out into the Busan rush hour. Seven lanes of traffic come to a sudden standstill in screeching salute.

'I know only one pace – full speed ahead. It's because I know what needs to be done and I want to get it done'

Cooper is already waiting at the back door of the conference hall. Inside the cavernous barn, the media sheep and wolves lounge impatiently. Old hands know that it wouldn't be an executive committee press conference if it were starting on time.

By the time the entourage stragglers have tumbled out of the cars and into a back-stage ante-room, Blatter and Zen-Ruffinen have already been briefed on both the agenda and the presence, in the wings, of World Cup songbird Anastacia. She is to be introduced to the media as a surprise guest.

No time to waste. Cooper introduces Blatter, who, of course, needs no introduction and briskly fires off bullet points from the exco marathon.

FIFA will sign an anti-doping charter on its own terms; World Cup winners will no longer be granted automatic entry to the next finals; the World Club Championship may replace the Confederations Cup in the 2003 calendar; financial deliberations have been postponed until December 18 (the day after FIFA's Player of the Year Gala); the statutes are to be rewritten in time for the FIFA centenary in 2004; FIFA will sign the World Health Organization's tobacco-free sport campaign ("Even though I like a cigar myself," says Blatter wistfully); referees can wear adverts on their sleeves; and each of the 32 World Cup finalists' delegations will leave Busan with a cheque for one million Swiss francs to help defray preparation costs.

Meet and greet...a welcome for Korean federation president Chung Mong-joon

Keep talking...Blatter with FIFA senior vice-president Julio Grondona

Blatter takes a rare breath and Zen-Ruffinen smoothly tidies up a mixed bag including disciplinary standardisation for passport forgeries and doping plus a FIFA/UEFA study of artificial pitches.

Question time. Blatter and Zen-Ruffinen switch easily from English to French to Spanish and back into English, depending on the linguistic source of the question. Then the Q and A is halted so Anastacia, who is found instantly to know nothing whatsoever about the game, can pose happily with Blatter and Adidas' latest World Cup football.

Some of the questions to Blatter are thoughtful, some are thoughtless. He is always polite in response. Indeed, the more banal the question, the more exaggeratedly courteous his reply.

Blatter believes utterly in personal self-command. He says: "I can deal with things this way because, even after a seven-hour meeting, as we had in the executive committee, I am able to keep a clear head and stay calm.

"Also, I have been doing this now for more than 20 years. I know everything about what football needs off the pitch and I know how it has to be done."

The moment he steps from the stage into the ante-room, official spokesman Andreas Herren is popping a draft of the exco press release under his nose. Blatter finds his glasses, scans the text, marks a few necessary alterations, then vanishes through the back door, into his car with its outriders, blue lights and sirens, and back to the Paradise.

No time for him to relax, as he might, with a crossword or the latest novel by James Patterson or Robert Ludlum. Time only to freshen up, change, then hurry back to the hotel lobby to return to the Bexco for a gala dinner hosted by the mayor of Busan.

Blatter, still ahead of the game, has been waiting in the lobby for several minutes before his panting staff catch up with him again.

Same surreal procedure: cars, outriders, blue lights and sirens for the third time in little more than two hours.

Back at the Bexco, girls resplendent in traditional dress line the red-carpet route between the escalators and bow deeply as Mr Perpetual Motion careers past. The only time he stops is when he reaches the reception salon and heads Johansson and Chung in a 'wedding queue' line. Blatter then greets the myriad guests with a handshake and a smile that says: "Welcome to the World Cup."

It's the ultimate greeting that lies within the power of a FIFA president. It's bestowed on the world's national coaches and their officialdom bodyguards, on the great and the good, the suits and the suitable, plus the men and (handful of) women who matter or think they matter.

Never at a loss for words

There's no such thing as a free dinner, of course. Politely, international football's in-crowd applauds the elaborate, reciprocally polite speeches of Blatter, Johansson and Chung. One slight hitch: Chung had omitted to warn Blatter he would be speaking.

Blatter, like any powerful man, has been accused of many things but being at a loss for words is not one of them. Unfazed, he rises from his seat, turns into the microphone and does the business, without notes. He finds all the right words: "Perfect organisation ...wonderful city," not forgetting the diplomatic precision of a tribute to the Japanese. Football, he says, has shown how to "join hands for better understanding between two nations who are nearby but who have not always been nearby".

It may not be perfect English but they know what he means. Cue more applause.

Johansson makes a similar speech from a sheaf of notes. Chung apologises airily for his breach of protocol. It won't rain on his parade. Busan is the heartland of the Hyundai family firm. The World Cup draw is being staged in this corner of Korea, in Hae-undae Beach, because the local boy has made more than good and is parading the point.

A seven-course dinner is interrupted at regular intervals by traditional music and dancing. Blatter watches intently, whether he has seen enough or not. The top table is almost on the stage and he sits at its epicentre. You never catch him yawning. Finally, at 10.45pm the last dancers leave the stage, the curtain falls, the lights come up and Blatter is smiled and bowed to the exit – one of the two parallel escalators being reserved for his personal flight.

Out on to the pavement, he finds the car door already thrown open, so off he glides back to the Paradise and a few hours' sleep before the repetitious pattern is woven into another bright, clear Korean morning.

FIFA meets Groundhog Day. Up at six, in the office by seven, presenting the official World Cup ball, lunch with Chung, and so on through to the draw at seven in the evening. Back at the Bexco, of course.

It's a strange, unnatural life. You wonder why so much falls on the shoulders of one person when Blatter has a 23-strong executive committee at his theoretical beck and call and a staff armed to the teeth with laptops, pagers and mobile phones.

Either way, it's too late for him to change the system now. He's imprisoned by it. But then, you know he loves it, really.

Prime Ministers have this problem and its insidious consequence. How do you keep in touch with real people – with the real You, even – when your car door is opened ahead of your arrival and you even have an escalator to yourself?

Blatter believes the answer is inborn. He says: "To be a successful leader it's necessary to understand people, the way they live and work and what they think. You cannot let yourself become isolated. You have to try to understand what people need – then you can do it. You can serve them. But it's not easy.

"You need a talent for it. No, not talent. That's not it. I think it's a form of intuition. Yes, intuition. I can't think of another word."

No doubt admirers and detractors could think of plenty. But Blatter wouldn't know. He would already be out of earshot.

'To be a successful leader you have to understand what people need; then you can serve them. It's not a talent, it's a form of intuition'

It's like this...Blatter gets his message across

FEB 2002

THE NO.1 INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL MAGAZINE

WORLD SERVICE

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S STATS & FACTS

INTERNATIONALS

Sunday, December 9

Dec 9 - Seogwipo - friendly
South Korea 1 (Yoo Sang-chul 23)
United States 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 42,256. **Ref:** Fuse (Jap)
South Korea: Kim Byung-ji - Choi Jin-chul (Choi Sung-yong 75), Song Chong-gug, Yoo Sang-chul, Kim Sang-sik, Lee Chun-soo, Kim Nam-il (Lee Young-pyo 54), Lee Eul-yong, Choi Tai-uk, Park Ji-sung (Kim Do-keun 80), Hwang Sun-hong (Kim Do-hoon 68).
United States: Thornton - Mastroeni (Mulrooney 68), Llamosa, Agoos, Gutierrez (Bocanegra 46), Armas, Jones (West 73), Lagos, Donovan, Wolff (Cunningham 46), McBride (Razov 55).

Wednesday, December 12

Dec 12 - Settat - friendly
Morocco 1 (Chippo pen 9)
Mali 1 (Bakayoko 39)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 4,000

Saturday, December 15

Dec 15 - Botswana - Four-team tnmt
Botswana 3
Namibia 2

Dec 15 - Miami - friendly
Haiti 0
El Salvador 0
Sent off: Altidor (Haiti) 25min

Sunday, December 16

Dec 16 - Botswana - Four-team tnmt Final
Botswana 1 (Pikati)
Lesotho 0
HT: 0-0

Dec 16 - Ouagadougou - friendly
Burkina Faso 1 (Barro 10)
Togo 2 (Salifou 15, Mbani 44)
HT: 1-2

Dec 16 - Botswana - Four-team tnmt 3-pl
Namibia 1
Zimbabwe U-23 0

Sunday, December 23

Dec 23 - Muscat - friendly
Oman 1
Syria 0
HT: 0-0

Wednesday, December 26

Dec 26 - Mopti - friendly
Mali 1 (Dissa 58)
Ghana 1 (Baour 9)
HT: 0-1

Dec 26 - Dakar - friendly
Senegal 2 (Thiaw pen 26, Sidibe og 69)
Burkina Faso 4 (Toure 22, 60, Sanou 57, Barro 89)
HT: 1-1

Saturday, December 29

Dec 29 - Kuwait City - friendly
Kuwait 0
Syria 0

Sunday, December 30

Dec 30 - Cotonou - friendly
Benin 1 (Noumon 37)
Togo 1 (Dossevi 3)
HT: 1-1

Dec 30 - Muscat - friendly
Oman 2 (Bachir 51, Al-Dhabit 58)
Macedonia 0
HT: 0-0

Dec 30 - Doha - friendly
Qatar 2 (Nadhmi 33, Rached 61)
Egypt 2 (Hossam 76, Bebo 79)
HT: 1-0

Dec 30 - Riyadh - friendly
Saudi Arabia 0
Zimbabwe 2 (Natadro 30, Katana 75)
HT: 0-1

Dec 30 - Dakar - friendly
Senegal 1 (H Camara 28)
Algeria 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Bouly (Gam)
Senegal: Silva - Daf, Coly, Diatta, A Cisse - Sarr (Bouba Diop 78), Diao (Graye 72), S N'Diaye, Fadiga - H Camara, Diouf.
Algeria: Gaouaoui - Rahou (Belbey 59), Meftah, Zafour, Bradja, Heddou - Mansouri (Bendahmane 70), Kraouche, Tasfaout (Kerkhache 74) - Ghazi, Akrour (Dziri 77).

Dec 30 - Tunis - friendly
Tunisia 7 (Zabi 10, 71, 90, Kanzari pen 35, Daassi 77, 83, Bouazizi 90)
Liberia 2 (Seator 15, 76)
HT: 2-1

Monday, December 31

Dec 31 - Kuwait City - friendly
Kuwait 2 (B Abdullah 21, B Al-Shoummari 75)
Syria 2 (Saabou 9, Haq 90)
HT: 1-1

Thursday, January 3

Jan 3 - Kuwait City - friendly
Kuwait 1 (Al-Huwaidi 22)
Romania 1 (Constantin pen 69)
HT: 1-0

Friday, January 4

Jan 4 - Manama, Bahrain - Four-team tnmt
Bahrain 0
Finland 2 (Kottila 43, Wiss 79)
HT: 0-1

Jan 4 - Ismailia - friendly
Egypt 2 (Bebo 42, Hosni 45)
Ghana 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 8,000

Jan 4 - Martinique - Four-team tnmt
Martinique 1
Guadeloupe 3

Saturday, January 5

Jan 5 - Kuwait City - friendly
Kuwait 3 (B Abdullah 23, Briki 32, Lahib 66)
Zimbabwe 0
HT: 2-0

Jan 5 - Manama, Bahrain - Four-team tnmt
Macedonia 0
Albania 0

Jan 5 - Riyadh - friendly
Saudi Arabia 2 (Al-Jaber 11, 20)
Romania 0
HT: 2-0

Sunday, January 6

Jan 6 - Havana - friendly
Cuba 0
Guatemala 1 (Ruiz 42)
HT: 0-1

Jan 6 - Martinique - Four-team tnmt 3-pl
Martinique 3
Haiti 3
Martinique 3-2 on pens

Monday, January 7

Jan 7 - Manama, Bahrain - Four-team tnmt
Bahrain 1 (Salmeen 12)
Macedonia 1 (Siljanoviska 40)
HT: 1-1

Jan 7 - Ouagadougou - friendly
Burkina Faso 1 (Ouedraogo 76)
Cameroon 3 (Foe 11, Mboma 20, Eto'o 43)
HT: 0-3

Jan 7 - Manama, Bahrain - Four-team tnmt
Finland 1 (Ilola 45)
Albania 1 (Fortuzi 72)
HT: 1-0

Tuesday, January 8

Jan 8 - friendly
Kuwait 0
Iceland 0

Jan 8 - friendly
Oman 1
Romania 2

Jan 8 - friendly
Qatar 0
Zimbabwe 2

Wednesday, January 9

Jan 9 - friendly
Cuba 0
Guatemala 0

Thursday, January 10

Jan 10 - Manama, Bahrain - Four-team tnmt
Bahrain 3 (Jamal 42, Salmane 63, 72)
Albania 0
HT: 1-0

Jan 10 - Manama, Bahrain - Four-team tnmt
Finland 3 (Kottila 18, 25, Niemi 23)
Macedonia 0
HT: 3-0

BAHRAIN FOUR-TEAM TNMT – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Finland	3	2	1	0	6	1	7
Bahrain	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Albania	3	0	2	1	1	4	2
Macedonia	3	0	2	1	1	4	2

Jan 10 - Kayes - friendly
Mali 1 (Keita 77)
Zambia 1 (Wilanzi 12)
HT: 0-1

Jan 10 - Riyadh - friendly
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al-Jamaan 74)
Iceland 0
HT: 0-0

EAST & CENTRAL AFRICAN SENIOR CHALLENGE CUP

In Rwanda

Group A

Dec 8: Rwanda 3 Somalia 0.
Dec 10: Kenya 2 Eritrea 1.
Dec 12: Kenya 3 Somalia 0; Rwanda 1 Eritrea 0.
Dec 15: Eritrea 0 Somalia 0; Rwanda 0 Kenya 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kenya	3	2	1	0	5	1	7
Rwanda	3	2	1	0	4	0	7
Eritrea	3	0	1	2	1	3	1
Somalia	3	0	1	2	0	6	1

Group B

Dec 9: Uganda 10 Djibouti 1; Tanzania 2 Burundi 1.
Dec 12: Burundi 3 Djibouti 1; Tanzania 1 Uganda 0.
Dec 13: Tanzania 4 Djibouti 1.
Dec 14: Burundi 2 Uganda 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tanzania	3	3	0	0	7	2	9
Burundi	3	2	0	1	6	3	6
Uganda	3	1	0	2	10	4	3
Djibouti	3	0	0	3	3	17	0

Group C

Dec 10: Rwanda B 3 Zanzibar 0.
Dec 13: Ethiopia 5 Zanzibar 0.
Dec 15: Rwanda B 1 Ethiopia 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ethiopia	2	1	1	0	6	1	4
Rwanda B	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Zanzibar	2	0	0	2	0	8	0

Top three from Groups A and B and top two from Group C qualified for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals

Dec 17
Kenya 1 (Oguda 90)
Eritrea 0
HT: 0-0

Rwanda B 2 (Witakenge 1, Kombi 56)
Tanzania 1 (Macho 5)
HT: 1-1

Dec 18
Ethiopia 2 (Yordanos 30, Mulu 65)
Burundi 2 (Karimbi 73, Tchit 87)
Aet. **HT:** 1-0. **90mins:** 2-2
Ethiopia 5-3 on pens

Rwanda 3 (Nshimiyamana 26, 65, Karekezi 27)
Uganda 2 (Isabirye 25, 47)
HT: 2-1

Semi-finals

Dec 20
Kenya 3 (Sunguti 8, 71, Maruti 56)
Rwanda B 1 (Kombi 17)
HT: 1-1

Ethiopia 1 (Mulu 7)
Rwanda 0
HT: 1-0

Third-place play-off

Dec 22
Rwanda 1
Rwanda B 1
Aet. Rwanda 5-3 on pens

Final

Dec 22 - Kigali
Ethiopia 2 (Abey, Mamoalem)
Kenya 1 (Mulama pen)
HT: 2-0

OTHER GAMES

Dec 27 - Seville - friendly
Andalucia 3 (Jesuli 31, Diego Tristan pen 65, 70)
Tunisia 3 (Boukadida 56, Badra pen 75, Gabsi 84)
HT: 1-0

Dec 28 - Barcelona - friendly
Catalonia 1 (Luis Garcia 56)
Chile 0
HT: 0-0

Dec 29 - Gijon - friendly
Asturian Selection 6 (Oli 3, Pablo Lago 20, Juanele 34, 50, Jose Manuel 57, Cesar 80)
Lithuania 1 (Dancenko pen 63)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 13,000. **Ref:** Muniz Fernandez

Dec 29 - Bilbao - friendly
Basque Selection 3 (Bolo 46, De Paula 50, 62)
Ghana 2 (Derek 18, Mensah 65)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 42,000. **Ref:** Iturralde Gonzalez

EUROPE

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

2nd group phase

Group A

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Bayern Munich	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Boavista	2	1	0	1	1	3	3
Nantes	2	0	0	2	0	2	0

Feb 20: Boavista v Bayern Munich; Nantes v Manchester United.
Feb 26: Bayern Munich v Boavista; Manchester United v Nantes.
Mar 13: Manchester United v Bayern Munich; Nantes v Boavista.
Mar 19: Bayern Munich v Nantes; Boavista v Manchester United.

Group B

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	2	1	1	0	5	3	4
Galatasaray	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
Roma	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Liverpool	2	0	1	1	1	3	1

Feb 20: Barcelona v Roma; Liverpool v Galatasaray.
Feb 26: Galatasaray v Liverpool; Roma v Barcelona.
Mar 13: Barcelona v Liverpool; Roma v Galatasaray.
Mar 19: Galatasaray v Barcelona; Liverpool v Roma.

Group C

GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	2	2	0	0	6	2	6
Sparta Prague	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
FC Porto	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Panathinaikos	2	0	1	1	0	3	1

Feb 19: Real Madrid v FC Porto; Sparta Prague v Panathinaikos.
Feb 27: Panathinaikos v Sparta Prague; FC Porto v Real Madrid.
Mar 12: FC Porto v Panathinaikos; Real Madrid v Sparta Prague.
Mar 20: Panathinaikos v Real Madrid; Sparta Prague v FC Porto.

Group D

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juventus	2	1	0	1	5	3	3
Arsenal	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Bayer Leverkusen	2	1	0	1	3	4	3
Dep La Coruna	2	1	0	1	2	3	3

Feb 19: Bayer Leverkusen v Arsenal; Juventus v Deportivo La Coruna.
Feb 27: Arsenal v Bayer Leverkusen; Deportivo La Coruna v Juventus.
Mar 12: Arsenal v Deportivo La Coruna; Bayer Leverkusen v Juventus.
Mar 20: Deportivo La Coruna v Bayer Leverkusen; Juventus v Arsenal.

UEFA CUP

4th rnd draw

*Valencia (Spa) v Servette (Swi) (1)
Lille (Fra) v Borussia Dortmund (Ger) (2)
PSV Eindhoven (Hol) v Leeds United (Eng) (3)
*Roda JC (Hol) v Milan (Ita) (4)
Internazionale (Ita) v AEK Athens (Gre) (5)
Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) v Parma (Ita) (6)
Lyon (Fra) v Slovan Liberec (Cze) (7)
Rangers (Sco) v Feyenoord (Hol) (8)
*1st legs, February 21 (*February 19); 2nd legs, February 28*

Quarter-finals draw

Winners (6) v Winners (4)
Winners (5) v Winners (1)
Winners (3) v Winners (8)
Winners (7) v Winners (2)
1st legs, March 14; 2nd legs, March 21

AUSTRIA

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Tirol	20	15	3	2	40	4	48
Grazer AK	22	11	6	5	47	30	39
Sturm Graz	21	10	8	3	38	22	38
Salzburg	22	9	6	7	25	24	33
Karnten	21	9	5	7	25	28	32
Austria Wien	21	6	7	8	26	25	25
Bregenz	22	6	7	9	28	45	25
SV Ried	22	5	6	11	27	38	21
Rapid Wien	21	5	5	11	18	29	20
Admira	22	3	3	16	16	45	12

BELGIUM

Saturday, December 8

Beveren 2 (Grondin 47, 68)
Royal Antwerp 3 (Sergeant 16, Mussa 55, Yattara 62) Att: 5,000

Charleroi 0
Gent 3 (Kaklamanos 42, 74, Christensen 49) Att: 11,000

Germinal Beerschot 3 (Degryse 31, Snelders 40, Huysmans 70)
Lommel 0 Att: 8,532

Lokeren 2 (Rudi 27, Zoundi 45)
La Louviere 2 (Tilmant 37, Zere og 83) Att: 4,000

Mouscron 2 (Dugardein 28, 75)
Genk 4 (Sonck 7, Dagano 32, 89, Michal Zewlakow og 54) Att: 8,000

St Truiden 0
Lierse 2 (Sels 55, Snoeckx 88) Att: 7,000

Standard 2 (Lukunku 21, Van Dooren 28)
Eendracht Aalst 0 Att: 11,450

Westerlo 1 (Schaessens 76)
Anderlecht 2 (Van Hout 57, De Bilde 62) Att: 9,000

Sunday, December 9

RWDM 2 (Kolotilko 61, Origi 86)
Club Brugge 3 (Mendoza 7, Lange 42, Martens 60) Att: 7,000

Tuesday, December 18

Beveren 1 (Danilevicius 70)
Anderlecht 4 (De Bilde 2, Dindane 24, Hendrikx 28, Mornar 32) Att: 10,000

Mouscron 2 (Martic 33, 64)
Club Brugge 0 Att: 10,500

Wednesday, December 19

Charleroi 1 (Rojas pen 75)
Germinal Beerschot 0 Att: 5,653

Lokeren 2 (Bangoura 63, Kristinsson 86)
Genk 2 (Beslija 65, Sonck 77) Att: 7,000

Royal Antwerp 0
La Louviere 0 Att: 3,000

RWDM 0
Gent 1 (Christensen 57) Att: 6,000

St Truiden 3 (Mitrovic 15, Delorge 43, Buvens 55)
Eendracht Aalst 1 (Olcese 10) Att: 5,000

Standard 2 (Lukunku 1, Van Meir 7)
Lommel 1 (Dekelver 88) Att: 9,000

Westerlo 5 (Vandenbergh 25, 50, 65, 90, Verheyen 88)
Lierse 4 (Frigard 28, Sels 54, Huysegems 72, 73) Att: 6,000

Friday, December 21

Anderlecht 1 (Dindane 67)
Club Brugge 0 Att: 24,500

Saturday, December 22

Westerlo 1 (Pelic 22)
Standard 2 (Da Silva Moreira 16, Ernst 17) Att: 6,000

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	17	12	1	4	38	19	37
Standard	17	11	4	2	32	18	37
Genk	17	10	6	1	48	23	36
Gent	17	11	3	3	32	21	36
Anderlecht	17	10	5	2	36	18	35
Lokeren	17	8	5	4	25	17	29
G Beerschot	17	7	5	5	35	24	26
St Truiden	17	6	4	7	26	27	22
Charleroi	17	6	3	8	15	29	21
Mouscron	17	6	1	10	29	28	19
Westerlo	17	5	3	9	28	32	18
Lommel	17	4	6	7	28	36	18
Eendracht Aalst	17	5	3	9	18	35	18
Lierse	17	4	5	8	25	29	17
RWDM	17	5	2	10	23	32	17
Royal Antwerp	17	4	4	9	22	29	16
La Louviere	17	3	5	9	20	36	14
Beveren	17	1	5	11	16	43	8

LEADING GOALSCORERS

18	Wesley Sonck (Genk)
16	Rune Lange (Club Brugge)
13	Beli Moumouni Dagano (Genk)
10	Desire Mbonabucya (St Truiden)
9	Zoran Ban (Mouscron)
9	Dirk Huysmans (Germinal Beerschot)
9	Paul Kpaka (Germinal Beerschot)
9	Kevin Vandenbergh (Westerlo)

BELGIAN CUP – last 16

Dec 12: La Louviere 2 Tubeke 1; Lierse 2 Eendracht Aalst 0; Lokeren 1 Oud-Heverlee 0; Mouscron 4 RWDM 1; Turnhout 2 Beveren 3.
Dec 15: Genk 2 Westerlo 1 (aet); Germinal Beerschot 0 St Truiden 1.

Still to play: Royal Antwerp v Club Brugge.

BULGARIA

Dec 12: Levski 2 Lovech 1.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Levski	17	13	3	1	31	11	42
CSKA	17	12	3	2	33	10	39
Lovech	17	11	4	2	36	20	37
Lok Plovdiv	17	9	3	5	25	16	30
Naftex*	17	8	5	4	26	14	29
Spartak Pleven	17	8	2	7	30	26	26
Lok Sofia	17	5	5	7	24	21	20
Spartak Varna	17	4	7	6	22	22	19
Slavia	17	4	6	7	14	21	18
Belasitsa	17	4	4	9	14	21	16
Cherno More	17	4	3	10	18	24	15
Chernomorets	17	3	5	9	12	37	14
Marek	17	3	4	10	15	33	13
Beroe	17	2	4	11	7	31	10

Formerly Neftohimik

CROATIA

Dec 5: Hajduk 2 Osijek 2.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zagreb	18	14	3	1	47	15	45
Varteks	18	12	3	3	40	20	39
Hajduk	18	12	2	4	38	22	38
Dinamo	18	11	3	4	30	19	36
Rijeka	18	9	3	6	27	20	30
Slaven	18	6	7	5	21	20	25
Cakovec	18	7	4	7	22	24	25
Hrvatski drag	18	6	5	7	22	26	23
Pomorac	18	6	3	9	22	25	21
Osijek	18	6	2	10	24	29	20
Marsonia	18	6	2	10	20	25	20
Zadar	18	4	6	8	21	32	18
Kamen Ingrad	18	4	5	9	15	27	17
Sibenik	18	4	5	9	12	25	17
Cibalia	18	4	3	11	17	28	15
TSK	18	4	2	12	26	47	14

CZECH REPUBLIC

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	16	13	0	3	37	9	39
Zizkov	16	12	1	3	26	11	37
Bohemians	16	11	3	2	27	11	36
Liberec	16	9	5	2	31	15	32
Ostrava	16	7	4	5	23	18	25
Slavia	16	7	3	6	27	23	24
Brno	16	6	4	6	18	27	22
Jablonec	16	5	6	5	14	15	21
Hradec Kralove	16	6	2	8	19	29	20
Teplice	16	5	3	8	17	22	18
Olomouc	16	4	6	6	13	20	18
Drnovice	16	4	4	8	20	21	16
Synot	16	4	4	8	14	23	16
Pribram	16	4	3	9	15	24	15
Chmel Blsany	16	4	1	11	19	32	13
Opava	16	2	1	13	12	32	7

DENMARK

Dec 9: Midtjylland 1 Esbjerg 1; Vejle 0 Silkeborg 4; AGF 7 Lyngby 0; Brondby 1 FC Copenhagen 0; AB 1 Viborg 2.
Dec 10: AaB 1 OB 1.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brondby	19	13	4	2	45	11	43
FC Copenhagen	19	9	6	4	29	17	33
AB	19	8	8	3	31	20	32
AaB	19	9	4	6	29	28	31
Esbjerg	19	9	3	7	29	27	30
Midtjylland	19	6	8	5	26	18	26
OB	19	6	8	5	28	28	26
Viborg	19	5	8	6	23	24	23
AGF	19	4	5	10	25	33	17
Silkeborg	19	4	4	11	18	29	16
Vejle	19	4	4	11	22	49	16
Lyngby	19	2	8	9	18	39	14

ENGLAND

Saturday, December 8

Charlton 3 (Stuart 4, Lisbie 19, 78)
Tottenham 1 (Poyet 85) Att: 25,125

Derby 1 (Christie 66)
Bolton 0 Att: 25,712

Fulham 2 (Hayles 36, 50)
Everton 0 Att: 19,338

Leicester 0
Southampton 4 (Svensson 12, 75, Beattie 64, Pahars 90) Att: 20,231

Liverpool 2 (Owen 27, Berger 45)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 43,674

Man Utd 0
West Ham 1 (Defoe 66) Att: 67,582

Sunday, December 9

Arsenal 3 (Wiltord 47, Henry 72, 90)
Aston Villa 2 (Merson 21, Stone 34) Att: 38,074

Blackburn 1 (Berg 82)
Leeds 2 (Kewell 53, 62) Att: 28,309

Ipswich 0
Newcastle 1 (Solano 20) Att: 24,748

Sunderland 0
Chelsea 0 Att: 48,017

Wednesday, December 12

Liverpool 0
Fulham 0 Att: 37,153

Man Utd 5 (Solskjaer 6, 58, Keane 10, Van Nistelrooy 63, Scholes 89)
Derby 0 Att: 67,577

Saturday, December 15

Bolton 0
Charlton 0 Att: 20,834

Everton 1 (Moore 76)
Derby 0 Att: 30,615

Middlesbrough 0
Man Utd 1 (Van Nistelrooy 75) Att: 34,358

Newcastle 2 (Bernard 65, Speed 70)
Blackburn 1 (Dunn 34) Att: 50,064

Southampton 2 (Craddock og 43, Pahars 67)
Sunderland 0 Att: 29,459

Tottenham 4 (Ferdinand 20, Anderton 40, Davies 71, Rebrov 77)
Fulham 0 Att: 36,054

West Ham 1 (Kanoute 36)
Arsenal 1 (Cole 39) Att: 34,523

Sunday, December 16

Chelsea 4 (Le Saux 3, Hasselbaink 28, Dalla Bona 71, Gudjohnsen 90)
Liverpool 0 Att: 41,174

Leeds 2 (Kewell 7, Viduka 59)
Leicester 2 (Deane 78, Scowcroft 88) Att: 38,237

Monday, December 17

Aston Villa 2 (Angel 44, 70)
Ipswich 1 (George 18) Att: 29,320

Tuesday, December 18

Arsenal 1 (Pires 20)
Newcastle 3 (O'Brien 60, Shearer pen 86, Robert 90) Att: 38,012

Wednesday, December 19

Leeds 3 (Viduka 19, Fowler 26, 71)
Everton 2 (Moore 84, Weir 90) Att: 40,201

Saturday, December 22

Charlton 0
Blackburn 2 (Duff 57, Dunn 90) Att: 25,857

Derby 3 (Ravanelli 45, Carbone 67, Christie 87)
Aston Villa 1 (Angel 45) Att: 28,001

Leeds 3 (Bowyer 38, Viduka 50, Harte 56)
Newcastle 4 (Bellamy 38, Elliott 59, Shearer pen 71, Solano 90) Att: 40,287

Leicester 1 (Izzet 43)
West Ham 1 (Di Canio pen 74) Att: 20,131

Man Utd 6 (Van Nistelrooy 1, 34, 54, Solskjaer 41, Keane 72, P Neville 78)
Southampton 1 (Pahars 55) Att: 67,638

Sunderland 1 (Reyna 77)
Everton 0 Att: 48,013

Tottenham 1 (Davies 12)
Ipswich 2 (George 40, Armstrong 88) Att: 36,040

Sunday, December 23

Chelsea 5 (Gudjohnsen 41, Hasselbaink 45, Zenden 56, Hendry og 75, Lampard 87)
Bolton 1 (Nolan 3) Att: 34,063

Liverpool 1 (Litmanen 55)
Arsenal 2 (Henry pen 45, Ljungberg 53) Att: 44,297

Wednesday, December 26

Arsenal 2 (Campbell 49, Wiltord 71)
Chelsea 1 (Lampard 31) Att: 38,079

Aston Villa 1 (Hendrie 21)
Liverpool 2 (Litmanen 9, Smicer 73) Att: 42,602

Blackburn 0
Sunderland 3 (Quinn 17, 32, Kilbane 90) Att: 29,869

Bolton 0
Leeds 3 (Fowler 2, 16, 89) Att: 27,060

Everton 0
Man Utd 2 (Giggs 78, Van Nistelrooy 85) Att: 39,948

Fulham 0
Charlton 0 Att: 17,900

Ipswich 2 (Bent 48, Peralta 55)
Leicester 0 Att: 24,403

Newcastle 3 (Shearer 29, Speed 58, Bernard 83)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 52,127

Southampton 1 (Beattie 56)
Tottenham 0 Att: 31,719

West Ham 4 (Schemmel 5, Di Canio 73, Sinclair 86, Defoe 90)
Derby 0 Att: 31,397

Saturday, December 29

Arsenal 2 (Pires 55, Cole 80)
Middlesbrough 1 (Whelan 22) Att: 37,948

Aston Villa 1 (Angel pen 90)
Tottenham 1 (Ferdinand 38) Att: 41,134

Blackburn 0
Derby 1 (Christie 40) Att: 23,529

Bolton 2 (Nolan 34, Ricketts 90)
Leicester 2 (Ricketts og 22, Deane 26) Att: 23,037

Everton 0
Charlton 3 (Stuart 29, Euell 68, Konchesky 88) Att: 31,131

Ipswich 5 (Armstrong 15, 27, Gaardsoe 26, George 31, Clapham 86)
Sunderland 0 Att: 24,517

Newcastle 1 (Shearer 37)
Chelsea 2 (Gudjohnsen 35, 45) Att: 52,123

Southampton 0
Leeds 1 (Bowyer 89) Att: 31,622

West Ham 1 (Sinclair 39)
Liverpool 1 (Owen 88) Att: 35,103

Sunday, December 30

Fulham 2 (Legwinski 45, Marlet 89)
Man Utd 3 (Giggs 5, 47, Van Nistelrooy 44) Att: 21,159

Tuesday, January 1

Charlton 3 (Robinson 16, Parker 32, Euell 61)
Ipswich 2 (M Bent 1, 5) Att: 25,893

Chelsea 2 (Gudjohnsen 20, Hasselbaink 45)
Southampton 4 (Beattie 7, 73, Pahars 55, Marsden 64) Att: 35,156

Leeds 3 (Viduka 4, 7, Fowler 50)
West Ham 0 Att: 39,320

Liverpool 1 (Gerrard 50)
Bolton 1 (Nolan 78) Att: 43,710

Middlesbrough 1 (Festa 50)
Everton 0 Att: 27,463

Sunderland 1 (Thorne 86)
Aston Villa 1 (Taylor 59) Att: 45,324

Tottenham 1 (Richards 45)
Blackburn 0 Att: 35,131

Wednesday, January 2

Derby 0
Fulham 1 (Carbonari og 72) Att: 28,165

Man Utd 3 (Van Nistelrooy 24, Scholes 50, 63)
Newcastle 1 (Shearer 69) Att: 67,646

Wednesday, January 9

Southampton 2 (Beattie pen 63, Riise og 71)
Liverpool 0 Att: 31,527

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leeds	21	11	8	2	33	17	41
Man Utd	21	12	3	6	51	31	39
Arsenal	20	11	6	3	41	24	39
Newcastle	21	12	3	6	39	28	39
Liverpool	21	11	5	5	30	22	38
Chelsea	21	8	9	4	33	20	33
Tottenham	21	9	4	8	32	27	31
Charlton	21	7	8	6	27	24	29
Aston Villa	21	7	8	6	27	26	29
Fulham	20	6	9	5	20	20	27
Sunderland	21	7	6	8	18	23	27
Southampton	21	8	1	12	25	33	25
West Ham	21	6	7	8	25	34	25
Everton	21	6	5	10	23	29	23
Bolton	21	5	8	8	24	32	23
Blackburn	21	5	7	9	25	26	22
Middlesbrough	20	6	4	10	19	28	22
Derby	21	5	4	12	15	36	19
Ipswich	21	4	6	11	26	31	18
Leicester	20	3	7	10	14	36	16

LEADING GOALSCORERS

16	Thierry Henry (Arsenal)
14	Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink (Chelsea)
13	Ruud Van Nistelrooy (Man Utd)
11	Michael Ricketts (Bolton)
11	Alan Shearer (Newcastle)
10	Michael Owen (Liverpool)
10	Marian Pahars (Southampton)
9	James Beattie (Southampton)
9	Robbie Fowler (Liverpool/Leeds)
8	Juan Pablo Angel (Aston Villa)
8	Fabrizio Ravanelli (Derby)

FA CUP – 3rd rnd (last 64)

Jan 5: Barnsley 1 Blackburn 1; Burnley 4 Canvey Island 1; Charlton 2 Blackpool 1; Dagenham & Redbridge 1 Ipswich 4; Grimsby 0 York 0; Leicester 2 Mansfield 1; Liverpool 3 Birmingham 0; Manchester City 2 Swindon 0; Millwall 2 Scunthorpe 1; Newcastle 2 Crystal Palace 0; Norwich 0 Chelsea 0; Portsmouth 1 Leyton Orient 4; Sheffield Utd 1 Nottingham Forest 0; Stoke 0 Everton 1; Sunderland 1 West Brom 2; Watford 2 Arsenal 4; Wolves 0 Gillingham 1.
Jan 6: Aston Villa 2 Man Utd 3; Cardiff 2 Leeds 1; Cheltenham 2 Oldham 1; Derby 1 Bristol Rovers 3; Macclesfield 0 West Ham 3.
Jan 8: Southend 1 Tranmere 3; Walsall 2 Bradford 0; Wimbledon 0 Middlesbrough 0; Wycombe 2 Fulham 2.

Still to play: Brighton v Preston; Coventry v Tottenham; Crewe v Sheffield Wed; Darlington v Peterborough; Rotherham v Southampton; Stockport v Bolton.

FRANCE

Saturday, December 8

Auxerre 2 (Mexes 57, Cisse 67)
Monaco 0 Att: 7,500

Bastia 2 (Vairelles 47, O Soumah 52)
Troyes 0 Att: 7,500

Guingamp 1 (Bardon 50)
Lens 0 Att: 11,406

Marseille 3 (Cavens 24, J Leroy 74, Andre Luiz 85)
Lorient 2 (Swierczewski og 33, Feindouno 54) Att: 48,000

Nantes 1 (Bonilla 60)
Montpellier 2 (Silvestre 64, Mansare 80) Att: 28,000

Sedan 0
Rennes 0 Att: 12,500

Sunday, December 9

Lille 1 (Bruno Cheyrou 45)
Sochaux 2 (Frau 18, 54) Att: 18,500

Lyon 1 (Bonnissel og 90)
Bordeaux 0 Att: 35,000

Metz 0
Paris SG 2 (Ogbeche 51, Okocha 88) Att: 19,817

Tuesday, December 18

Bordeaux 0
Marseille 0 Att: 32,389

Lens 3 (Sibierski 48, Sakho pen 51, Bucher 79)
Nantes 0 Att: 37,452

Wednesday, December 19

Bastia 3 (Vairelles pen 58, Essien 63, Bourdeau og 86)
Guingamp 0 Att: 7,500

Lorient 2 (Darcheville 24, Chabert 60)
Lille 4 (Sterjovski 8, 78, Bakari 21, Landrin 65) Att: 13,500

Paris SG 0
Auxerre 0 Att: 45,000

Rennes 1 (Sorlin 7)
Sochaux 1 (Trapasso 65) Att: 15,332

Sedan 2 (Deflandre og 8, N'Diefi 60)
Lyon 1 (Violeau 12) Att: 12,500

Friday, December 21

Marseille 1 (Leboeuf pen 17)
Lens 2 (Diouf 40, Coulibaly 82) Att: 52,000

Saturday, December 22

Guingamp 1 (Malouda 18)
Sedan 2 (Camara 77, 84) Att: 9,006

Monaco 3 (Camara 4, Nonda 67, Farnerud 90)
Rennes 1 (Piquionne 80) Att: 3,500

Nantes 1 (Moldovan 84)
Troyes 0 Att: 29,552

Sochaux 0
Paris SG 2 (Leroy 39, Ogbeche 44) Att: 19,213

Saturday, January 5

Bastia 0
Nantes 2 (Devineau 38, Ahamada 71) Att: 5,000

Bordeaux 2 (Sanchez 38, Pauleta 73)
Rennes 1 (Sorlin 29) Att: 22,000

Guingamp 2 (Bardon 6, Fiorese 57)
Lyon 4 (Delmotte 47, 49, 87, Anderson 55) Att: 9,000

Lorient 1 (Bouard 51)
Sochaux 1 (Isabey 58) Att: 9,000

Montpellier 2 (Carotti 27, Ecker og 63)
Lille 0 Att: 9,921

Paris SG 1 (Ronaldinho pen 42)
Monaco 2 (Camara 53, Gallardo 90) Att: 42,141

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lens	19	12	5	2	35	14	41
Lyon	19	11	3	5	37	20	36
Auxerre	18	9	6	3	26	18	33
Lille	19	9	6	4	25	19	33
Paris SG	20	7	10	3	23	15	31
Bordeaux	19	8	7	4	17	11	31
Sochaux	20	7	7	6	28	25	28
Montpellier	18	6	7	5	19	15	25
Troyes	18	7	4	7	21	21	25
Marseille	19	5	8	6	17	17	23
Monaco	19	6	5	8	21	22	23
Sedan	19	5	7	7	22	22	22
Bastia	19	7	1	11	20	29	22
Rennes	20	5	5	10	19	31	20
Guingamp	20	5	5	10	18	35	20
Nantes	20	5	4	11	16	28	19
Metz	17	5	2	10	9	18	17
Lorient	19	4	4	11	28	41	16

LEADING GOALSCORERS
12 Pauleta (Bordeaux)
11 Djibril Cisse (Auxerre)
11 Jean-Claude Darcheville (Lorient)
9 Pierre-Alain Frau (Sochaux)
9 Daniel Moreira (Lens)
9 Shabani Nonda (Monaco)
7 Henri Camara (Sedan)
7 Bruno Cheyrou (Lille)
7 Olivier Monterrubio (Rennes)

FRENCH CUP – last 64

Dec 14: Metz 5 Grenoble 0; Montpellier 3 Martigues 2; Nancy 3 Niort 1 (aet); Valenciennes 0 Lens 1.
Dec 15: Aurillac 1 US Change 3 (aet); Balma 0 Rennes 1 (aet); Bastia 3 Nantes 1; Boulogne-sur-Mer 1 Sochaux 5 (aet); Chalon-sur-Saone 2 Sedan 3 (aet); Douai 1 Lorient 3 (aet); Fontenay-le-Comte 0 Laval 1; Frejus 0 Bordeaux 6; Issy-les-Moulineaux 2 Avion 1; La Fleche 0 Chateauroux 1; La Roche-sur-Yon 1 Clermont Foot 0 (aet); Le Havre 0 Nimes 0 (aet; Nimes 5-3 on pens); Libourne-St-Seurin 2 Lille 0; Louhans-Cuiseaux 1 Saint-Etienne 0 (aet); Lucon 0 Paris SG 2; Marseille 2 Saint-Leu-la-Foret 0; Millau 0 Ajaccio 1; Reims 1 Racing Paris 0; Saint-Malo 0 Lyon 6; Saint-Priest 0 Auxerre 0 (aet; Saint-Priest 5-3 on pens); Strasbourg 3 Le Mans 1 (aet); Tours 2 Guingamp 2 (aet; Guingamp 4-1 on pens); Trelissac 0 Amiens 1; Troyes 0 Nice 0 (aet; Troyes 2-0 on pens); US Montagnarde 2 Caen 1; Vesoul 2 Monaco 3 (aet); Yzeure 2 Cannes 1.
Dec 16: Creutzwald 0 Lusitanos 0 (aet; Lusitanos 3-1 on pens).

GEORGIA

GEORGIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Torpedo Kutaisi	18	14	2	2	44	11	44
Lokomotivi Tbilisi	18	12	3	3	33	10	39
Merani 91	18	10	2	6	32	24	32
Dinamo Batumi	18	9	4	5	24	15	31
Kolkheti	18	9	3	6	28	26	30
Dinamo Tbilisi	18	8	4	6	29	18	28
WIT Georgia	18	7	6	5	27	23	27
Sioni Bolnisi	18	6	4	8	16	24	22
Guria Lanchkhuti	18	3	6	9	14	30	15
Metalurgi Z'toni	18	2	6	10	10	34	12
Gorda Rustavi	18	2	4	12	15	35	10
Samgurali	18	2	4	12	14	36	10

GERMANY

Saturday, December 8

Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Ze Roberto 28, Sebescen 62, Ballack 64, Neuville 84)
Nurnberg 2 (Cacau 26, 58) Att: 22,500

Bayern Munich 3 (Pizarro 11, 56, Elber 17)
Wolfsburg 3 (Maric 44, 71, Kuhbauer 52) Att: 37,000

Borussia Dortmund 1 (Ricken 50)
Hamburg 0 Att: 67,500

Borussia MG 0
Hansa Rostock 2 (Rydlewicz 13, Arvidsson 73) Att: 24,600

Energie Cottbus 0
Kaiserslautern 2 (Marschall 31, Lincoln 47) Att: 13,020

St Pauli 0
Werder Bremen 3 (Skrypnyk pen 19, Ailton 55, Borovski 69) Att: 20,619

Stuttgart 0
1860 Munich 1 (Dheedene 65) Att: 21,000

Sunday, December 9

Freiburg 0
Koln 0 Att: 25,000

Schalke 0
Hertha 0 Att: 60,204

Saturday, December 15

Hamburg 1 (Prager 30)
Freiburg 1 (Muller 69) Att: 35,012

Hansa Rostock 1 (Hirsch 86)
Bayern Munich 0 Att: 30,000

Hertha 2 (Neuendorf 18, Dardai 62)
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Neuville 37) Att: 34,635

Koln 0
Energie Cottbus 0 Att: 29,000

1860 Munich 2 (Max 23, 42)
Borussia MG 2 (Korzynietz 21, Van Lent 26) Att: 19,700

Nurnberg 0
St Pauli 0 Att: 20,000

Werder Bremen 1 (Frings 40)
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Ewerthon 54) Att: 35,000

Sunday, December 16

Kaiserslautern 2 (Ratinho 4, Lokvenc 63)
Stuttgart 2 (Meissner 32, Kuranyi 87) Att: 38,500

Wolfsburg 3 (Nemec og 51, Maric 61, pen 74)
Schalke 1 (Wilmots 65) Att: 18,000

Tuesday, December 18

Bayern Munich 0
Borussia MG 0 Att: 41,000

Hamburg 5 (Prager 52, 60, Fukal 63, Mahdavikia 74, Barbarez 82)
Energie Cottbus 2 (Schroter 26, Reghecampf 83) Att: 32,423

Hertha 2 (Marcelinho 62, Schmidt 85)
St Pauli 2 (Meggle pen 50, Rath 63) Att: 25,000

Nurnberg 2 (Muller 52, Nikl 65)
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Ricken 73, Stevic 76) Att: 25,000

Werder Bremen 3 (Bode 11, Krstajic 52, Skrypnyk pen 59)
Freiburg 2 (Coulibaly 45, Zeyer 54) Att: 25,277

Wednesday, December 19

Hansa Rostock 1 (Oswald 70)
Schalke 3 (Wilmots 17, 75, Sand 26) Att: 16,434

Kaiserslautern 1 (Klose 57)
1860 Munich 3 (Hassler pen 70, Max 77, Wiesinger 86) Att: 34,049

Koln 0
Stuttgart 0 Att: 28,000

Wolfsburg 3 (Ponte 40, Maric 57, 77)
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Neuville 87) Att: 12,166

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B Leverkusen	18	12	3	3	44	24	39
B Dortmund	18	12	3	3	30	12	39
Werder Bremen	18	11	3	4	31	19	36
Kaiserslautern	18	11	2	5	38	25	35
Bayern Munich	18	10	4	4	34	11	34
Hertha	18	9	5	4	29	22	32
Schalke	18	8	5	5	23	21	29
1860 Munich	18	8	3	7	26	30	27
Wolfsburg	18	7	4	7	32	26	25
Stuttgart	18	6	7	5	20	18	25
Hamburg	18	5	5	8	25	29	20
Hansa Rostock	18	5	4	9	17	25	19
Freiburg	18	4	6	8	22	30	18
Borussia MG	18	3	8	7	19	26	17
Koln	18	3	5	10	11	28	14
Energie Cottbus	18	3	5	10	15	33	14
Nurnberg	18	3	4	11	14	33	13
St Pauli	18	1	6	11	18	36	9

LEADING GOALSCORERS
10 Marcio Amoroso (Borussia Dortmund)
10 Claudio Pizarro (Bayern Munich)
9 Michael Ballack (Bayer Leverkusen)
9 Oliver Neuville (Bayer Leverkusen)
8 Giovane Elber (Bayern Munich)
8 Tomislav Maric (Wolfsburg)
7 Ailton (Werder Bremen)
7 Ulf Kirsten (Bayer Leverkusen)
7 Miroslav Klose (Kaiserslautern)
7 Marcelinho (Hertha)

GERMAN CUP – last 16

Dec 11: FSV Mainz 05 2 Kaiserslautern 3; Stuttgart 2 1860 Munich 2 (aet; 1860 4-2 on pens); Union Berlin 1 Rot-Weiß Oberhausen 2.
Dec 12: Eintracht Frankfurt 1 Hertha 2 (aet); SV Darmstadt 98 0 Schalke 1 (aet); Uerdingen 1 Koln 1 (aet; Koln 5-3 on pens).

Still to play: Bayern Munich v Wolfsburg; Hannover 96 v Bayer Leverkusen.

GREECE

Dec 8: OFI 1 Olympiakos 1; Aris 1 Panahaiki 1.
Dec 9: Panionios 2 AEK 6; Xanthi 4 Aigaleo 2; Ethnikos A 1 Ionikos 0; Iraklis 1 Akratitos 1; Panathinaikos 1 PAOK 2.
Dec 15: Panahaiki 1 Iraklis 1; Akratitos 2 Olympiakos 3.
Dec 16: Xanthi 3 Panionios 1; AEK 4 Aris 2; Aigaleo 1 Ethnikos A 0; Ionikos 0 Panathinaikos 2; PAOK 3 OFI 2.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AEK	10	9	0	1	25	7	27
Olympiakos	10	6	4	0	26	12	22
Xanthi	10	5	3	2	17	11	18
PAOK	10	5	3	2	17	13	18
Aris	10	4	4	2	13	11	16
Panathinaikos	10	4	3	3	23	12	15
OFI	10	4	2	4	11	13	14
Iraklis	10	3	4	3	11	13	13
Ethnikos A	10	3	2	5	10	14	11
Panionios	10	2	4	4	13	20	10
Akratitos	10	2	3	5	11	14	9
Panahaiki	10	1	3	6	9	23	6
Ionikos	10	0	5	5	7	17	5
Aigaleo	10	1	2	7	12	25	5

HOLLAND

Friday, December 7

Fortuna 1 (Landerl 47)
Den Bosch 3 (De Freitas 24, Van den Eede pen 54, 81) Att: 6,000

Vitesse 2 (Peeters 48, Claessens 56)
De Graafschap 1 (Schulp pen 68) Att: 25,000

Saturday, December 8

AZ 1 (Kromkamp 6)
Roda JC 2 (Luypers 13, Berglund 59) Att: 7,381

NAC 0
RKC 1 (Hoogendorp 90) Att: 13,477

Willem II 2 (Shoukov 36, Bombarda 62)
Heerenveen 2 (Allback 80, Radomski 90) Att: 13,300

Sunday, December 9

Feyenoord 5 (Tomasson 39, Van Hooijdonk 44, pen 51, Bosvelt 56, Korneev 84)
NEC 0 Att: 38,000

Groningen 0
Sparta 0 Att: 12,550

PSV 1 (Ooijer pen 57)
Twente 0 Att: 31,000

Friday, December 14

Fortuna 2 (Volmer pen 32, Hamming 56)
NAC 3 (Bobson 14, Sergio 19, Peto 86) Att: 5,000

Saturday, December 15

De Graafschap 1 (Van der Haar 66)
Willem II 1 (Sektioui 72) Att: 11,000

Den Bosch 4 (Van den Eede 42, 60, Mghizrat 82, Deckers 90)
Vitesse 1 (Kreek 44) Att: 5,544

Roda JC 1 (Anastasiou pen 23)
Ajax 1 (Ibrahimovic 68) Att: 17,000

Twente 0
AZ 0 Att: 13,000

Sunday, December 16

Feyenoord 0
PSV 0 Att: 43,000

Groningen 2 (Drent 8, Hoogstrate 86)
Utrecht 2 (Jochemsen 62, Gluscevic 65) Att: 12,674

NEC 1 (Klompe og 77)
Heerenveen 0 Att: 10,000

RKC 1 (Hoogendorp 58)
Sparta 1 (Boukhari 11) Att: 6,550

Wednesday, December 19

Ajax 5 (Van der Vaart 15, 25, 81, O'Brien 29, Wamberto 47)
Vitesse 1 (Claessens 18) Att: 34,818

Fortuna 3 (Cramb 56, Hamming 62, Landerl 66)
Utrecht 3 (Zwaanswijk 15, Dirkx og 58, Kuijt 72) Att: 6,000

Heerenveen 2 (Allback 35, Denneboom 88)
Den Bosch 0 Att: 14,200

Twente 3 (Booth 34, Pothuizen 89, De Gier 90)
Feyenoord 2 (Van Hooijdonk 59, Pothuizen og 61) Att: 13,500

Saturday, December 22

NAC 2 (Stewart 31, Sergio 42)
Heerenveen 1 (Bak Jensen 83) Att: 14,126

PSV 8 (Ooijer 16, Bouma 18, Rommedahl 28, Ramzi 31, 45, Vennegoor of Hesselink 62, 82, 87)
Groningen 0 Att: 30,400

Vitesse 1 (Knol 35)
RKC 1 (De Graef 2) Att: 24,200

Willem II 3 (Janssens 28, Landzaat pen 61, Bombarda 72)
Twente 3 (Booth 15, 63, Van der Laan 66) Att: 13,500

Sunday, December 23

NEC 1 (Demouge 9)
Roda JC 0 Att: 9,500

Utrecht 3 (Tanghe 62, Van Mol 73, Jochemsen 86)
Ajax 1 (Van der Meyde 7) Att: 13,500

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax	18	11	3	4	42	23	36
Feyenoord	17	11	2	4	38	14	35
PSV	19	10	4	5	40	23	34
NAC	19	10	4	5	35	28	34
Heerenveen	19	9	5	5	32	15	32
Utrecht	19	9	5	5	40	27	32
Vitesse	19	8	6	5	21	21	30
RKC	19	8	4	7	27	21	28
NEC	19	7	4	8	15	30	25
Den Bosch	18	5	7	6	28	27	22
Willem II	19	4	10	5	30	32	22
Twente	19	4	9	6	23	27	21
AZ	18	6	3	9	19	23	21
Roda JC	19	5	4	10	18	27	19
Sparta	18	4	7	7	18	34	19
Groningen	19	5	4	10	20	39	19
De Graafschap	18	5	3	10	22	33	18
Fortuna	18	2	4	12	19	43	10

LEADING GOALSCORERS
14 Rafael Van der Vaart (Ajax)
14 Pierre Van Hooijdonk (Feyenoord)
12 Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink (PSV)
11 Marcus Allback (Heerenveen)
11 Jon Dahl Tomasson (Feyenoord)
10 Rick Hoogendorp (RKC)
9 Igor Gluscevic (Utrecht)
9 Stefaan Tanghe (Utrecht)
9 Bart Van den Eede (Den Bosch)

DUTCH CUP – last 16

Dec 11: Roda JC 0 Heerenveen 1; Utrecht 4 Excelsior 1; Stormvogels/Telstar 1 Fortuna 0.
Dec 12: Ajax 4 RBC 3 (aet); Feyenoord 2 Den Bosch 0; Groningen 3 Zwolle 0; RKC 1 PSV 2 (aet); Ajax 2 (reserves) 2 Twente 1 (aet).

HUNGARY

Dec 9: Ujpest 2 Matav 1.

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
MTK	22	17	3	2	46	13	54
Zalaegerszeg	22	13	4	5	44	26	43
Dunaferr	22	10	7	5	43	23	37
Videoton	22	10	6	6	29	26	36
Ferencvaros	22	10	4	8	34	30	34
Ujpest	22	8	5	9	39	40	29
Kispest-Honved	22	7	5	10	30	41	26
Debrecen	22	5	10	7	26	31	25
Matav	22	6	5	11	33	42	23
Gyor	22	4	9	9	27	38	21
Haladas	22	4	7	11	23	44	19
Vasas	22	4	3	15	24	44	15

ITALY

Saturday, December 8

Piacenza 2 (Hubner 51, 63)
Bologna 0 Att: 8,006

Sunday, December 9

Brescia 1 (Tare 21)
Inter 3 (Ronaldo 19, Vieri 63, 70) Att: 19,500

Chievo 2 (Marazzina 22, Corini pen 77)
Lecce 1 (Cimerotic 52) Att: 8,725

Lazio 3 (Poborsky 12, Crespo 59, Claudio Lopez 86)
Fiorentina 0 Att: 38,090

Milan 1 (Shevchenko 23)
Juventus 1 (Del Piero pen 47) Att: 71,691

Parma 1 (Di Vaio 31)
Roma 2 (Assuncao 49, Fuser 77) Att: 21,667

Perugia 2 (Vryzas 45, Rezaei 80)
Venezia 0 Att: 9,925

Torino 1 (Galante 13)
Atalanta 2 (Doni 45, Colombo 70) Att: 14,497

Udinese 2 (Muzzi pen 82, Pinzi 86)
Verona 1 (Oddo 69) Att: 15,637

Saturday, December 15

Inter 1 (Vieri 25)
Chievo 2 (Corradi 20, Marazzina 54) Att: 53,485

Sunday, December 16

Atalanta 4 (Berretta 23, Sala 43, Doni 59, Comandini 66)
Parma 1 (Micoud 67) Att: 13,770

Bologna 2 (Pecchia 28, Fresi 45)
Perugia 1 (Tedesco 21) Att: 16,908

Fiorentina 1 (Ganz 90)
Brescia 0 Att: 14,197

Juventus 2 (Ferrera 35, Trezeguet 90)
Piacenza 0 Att: 35,246

Lecce 1 (Cimerotic 49)
Torino 1 (Lucarelli 76) Att: 10,468

Roma 1 (Totti 44)
Milan 0 Att: 62,621

Venezia 2 (Maniero 39, Valtolina 73)
Udinese 1 (Helguera 66) Att: 6,909

Verona 3 (L Colucci 21, Camoranesi 41, Mutu 72)
Lazio 1 (Crespo 55) Att: 15,558

Wednesday, December 19

Atalanta 1 (Sala 32)
Milan 1 (Shevchenko 57) Att: 16,444

Bologna 0
Udinese 1 (Jorgensen 55) Att: 16,844

Fiorentina 1 (Nuno Gomes 79)
Juventus 1 (Trezeguet 57) Att: 19,756

Inter 3 (Vieri 18, Ronaldo 50, 55)
Verona 0 Att: 47,728

Lecce 2 (Chevanton pen 22, Conticchio 40)
Perugia 3 (Tedesco 20, Bazzani 38, Chimenti og 86) Att: 11,024

Roma 0
Brescia 0 Att: 51,228

Torino 1 (Ferrante 45)
Parma 0 Att: 12,616

Venezia 2 (Maniero 32, Magallanes 58)
Piacenza 3 (Gautieri 53, Poggi 80, 81) Att: 6,054

Saturday, December 22

Chievo 0
Roma 3 (Emerson 27, Samuel 76, Tommasi 90) Att: 16,767

Lazio 2 (Claudio Lopez 19, 34)
Bologna 2 (Cruz 41, Zaccardo 75) Att: 35,576

Sunday, December 23

Brescia 0
Juventus 4 (Trezeguet 30, Del Piero 42, Ferrara 56, Davids 69) Att: 18,086

Milan 2 (Ambrosini 58, Contra 90)
Verona 1 (Cannavaro 70) Att: 50,947

Parma 2 (Bonazzoli 71, Di Vaio 82)
Fiorentina 0 Att: 16,789

Perugia 2 (Bazzani 51, 90)
Atalanta 0 Att: 7,286

Piacenza 2 (Gautieri 55, 74)
Inter 3 (Vieri pen 45, 83, Kallon 69) Att: 15,963

Torino 1 (Comotto 64)
Venezia 2 (Maniero 14, 90) Att: 14,091

Udinese 0
Lecce 1 (Giacomazzi 1) Att: 13,377

Saturday, January 5

Lecce 0
Milan 1 (Jose Mari 78) Att: 21,274

Sunday, January 6

Atalanta 1 (Berretta 5)
Chievo 2 (Marazzina 60, Cossato 77) Att: 16,633

Bologna 2 (Petruzzi og 11, Nervo 30)
Brescia 1 (Toni 43) Att: 17,623

Fiorentina 1 (Adani 8)
Perugia 3 (Vryzas 32, Di Loreto 58, Grosso 75) Att: 15,000

Inter 0
Lazio 0 Att: 54,380

Juventus 3 (Zambrotta 15, Nedved 26, Davids 41)
Udinese 0 Att: 36,845

Roma 1 (Totti 24)
Torino 0 Att: 54,568

Venezia 3 (Bettarini 14, Maniero pen 45, 88)
Parma 4 (Di Vaio 18, 23, 90, Bonazzoli 37) Att: 6,856

Verona 1 (Zanchi 73)
Piacenza 0 Att: 12,452

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Roma	17	10	6	1	25	9	36
Inter	17	10	5	2	31	16	35
Chievo	16	10	2	4	30	20	32
Juventus	17	8	7	2	30	13	31
Milan	17	8	6	3	26	18	30
Bologna	17	8	3	6	15	16	27
Lazio	16	6	7	3	21	12	25
Verona	17	7	4	6	23	24	25
Perugia	17	6	4	7	20	21	22
Udinese	17	6	3	8	24	28	21
Atalanta	17	6	3	8	22	29	21
Piacenza	17	5	3	9	23	25	18
Brescia	17	4	6	7	20	30	18
Torino	17	4	5	8	18	23	17
Parma	17	4	5	8	21	27	17
Lecce	17	4	5	8	18	25	17
Fiorentina	17	4	2	11	18	35	14
Venezia	17	2	4	11	15	29	10

LEADING GOALSCORERS

12	Marco Di Vaio (Parma)
12	Dario Hubner (Piacenza)
11	Cristiano Doni (Atalanta)
11	Andrii Shevchenko (Milan)
11	Christian Vieri (Inter)
10	Filippo Maniero (Venezia)
10	Roberto Muzzi (Udinese)
10	David Trezeguet (Juventus)
9	Mohamed Kallon (Inter)
9	Massimo Marazzina (Chievo)
8	Roberto Baggio (Brescia)
8	Hernan Crespo (Lazio)
8	Alessandro Del Piero (Juventus)

ITALIAN CUP – quarter-finals

1st legs
Dec 12: Roma 0 Brescia 1; Udinese 1 Parma 1.
Jan 9: Juventus 4 Atalanta 2.
Jan 10: Milan 2 Lazio 1.

2nd legs
Jan 8: Brescia 3 Roma 0 *Brescia 4-0 on agg.*
Jan 9: Parma 0 Udinese 0 *Agg 1-1. Parma on away goals.*

MOLDOVA

MOLDOVA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Serif	14	11	3	0	30	8	36
Zimbru	14	7	6	1	28	8	27
Nistru Otaci	14	7	4	3	21	10	25
Tiligul	14	4	3	7	15	22	15
FC Hincesti	14	4	3	7	16	27	15
Happy End	14	2	6	6	17	21	12
Constructorul	14	3	3	8	13	29	12
FC Agro	14	3	2	9	10	25	11

POLAND

CHAMPIONSHIP POOL

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wisla	2	2	0	0	4	0	20 [14]
Legia	2	1	1	0	1	0	18 [14]
Amica	2	1	1	0	2	1	16 [12]
Odra	2	0	0	2	1	5	16 [16]
Polonia	2	0	1	1	1	3	14 [13]
Ruch Chorzow	2	1	0	1	4	3	13 [10]
Pogon	2	0	1	1	0	1	13 [12]
Katowice	2	1	0	1	2	2	12 [9]

Teams carried forward half their points (figure in brackets) from regular season

PORTUGAL

Friday, December 7

Farense 2 (Hassan Nader pen 50, 84)
Belenenses 2 (Verona 60, Cesar Peixoto 89)

Saturday, December 8

Guimaraes 2 (Marco 2, Nuno Assis 45)
FC Porto 0

Pacos Ferreira 2 (Ze Manuel 11, Leonardo 25)
Benfica 1 (Joao Manuel Pinto 13)

Sporting Braga 3 (Barroso 44, Miran 67, Barata 69)
Beira Mar 2 (Fary 31, Juninho Petrolina 63)

Sunday, December 9

Boavista 0
Maritimo 1 (Andre 33)

Gil Vicente 3 (Manoel 19, Sergio Lomba 29, 70)
Alverca 2 (Zeferino 27, Ramires pen 68)

Santa Clara 1 (Telmo 20)
Setubal 0

Sporting Lisbon 4 (Ricardo Quaresma 2, Jardel 19, 28, Joao Pinto 42)
Varzim 0

Uniao Leiria 7 (Derlei pen 24, 45, 50, 54, Maciel 35, 79, Jacques pen 74)
Salgueiros 0

Saturday, December 15

Alverca 1 (Ramires pen 39)
Farense 0

Beira Mar 0
Santa Clara 1 (Miner 29)

Belenenses 2 (Marcao 7, 36)
Guimaraes 1 (Fangueiro 76)

Benfica 2 (Simao pen 11, Zahovic 12)
Sporting Lisbon 2 (Jardel 85, 87)

FC Porto 0
Sporting Braga 0

Salgueiros 2 (Joao Pedro 56, Litera pen 67)
Maritimo 1 (Danny 44)

Setubal 1 (Hugo Henrique 89)
Pacos Ferreira 3 (Ze Manuel 45, 54, Leonardo 67)

Uniao Leiria 2 (Silas 19, Derlei 74)
Gil Vicente 1 (Paulo Alves 78)

Varzim 0
Boavista 2 (Silva 15, Martelinho 32)

Saturday, December 22

Farense 0
Uniao Leiria 1 (Derlei 74)

Guimaraes 2 (Flamarion 11, Fangueiro 90)
Alverca 0

Maritimo 1 (Andre pen 65)
Varzim 1 (Quim Berto 28)

Pacos Ferreira 0
Beira Mar 0

Salgueiros 3 (Litera 47, Joao Pedro 65, 83)
Gil Vicente 0

Santa Clara 2 (Tonito pen 18, 56)
FC Porto 1 (Helder Postiga 64)

Sporting Braga 2 (Barata 11, 34)
Belenenses 3 (Cafu 60, 64, Filgueira 90)

Sporting Lisbon 1 (Jardel 90)
Setubal 0

Sunday, December 23

Boavista 1 (Silva 6)
Benfica 0

Friday, January 4

Alverca 0
Sporting Braga 3 (Tiago 29, Barata 48, Castanheira 57)

Saturday, January 5

Beira Mar 1 (Juninho Petrolina 59)
Sporting Lisbon 2 (Andre Cruz 30, 80)

Benfica 1 (Mantorras 25)
Maritimo 1 (Eric Gaucho 9)

Uniao Leiria 2 (Derlei 19, Jacques 73)
Guimaraes 1 (Flamarion 89)

Sunday, January 6

Belenenses 1 (Cesar Peixoto pen 57)
Santa Clara 1 (Morales 8)

Gil Vicente 3 (Douala 55, 88, Ali 66)
Farense 1 (Luis Loureiro og 23)

FC Porto 1 (Deco 42)
Pacos Ferreira 0

Varzim 0
Salgueiros 0

Monday, January 7

Setubal 1 (Helio 46)
Boavista 1 (Sanchez 79)

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting Lisbon	17	11	3	3	38	13	36
Boavista	17	10	3	4	28	13	33
FC Porto	17	10	2	5	29	14	32
Uniao Leiria	17	8	6	3	30	15	30
Benfica	17	7	8	2	26	18	29
Belenenses	17	8	4	5	25	24	28
Guimaraes	17	7	4	6	19	18	25
Sporting Braga	17	6	5	6	23	15	23
Maritimo	17	7	2	8	21	20	23
Santa Clara	17	6	5	6	15	20	23
Pacos Ferreira	17	5	6	6	20	26	21
Gil Vicente	17	6	3	8	21	29	21
Salgueiros	17	6	3	8	17	33	21
Beira Mar	17	4	6	7	27	28	18
Setubal	17	4	5	8	19	21	17
Farense	17	4	3	10	12	26	15
Alverca	17	4	3	10	19	34	15
Varzim	17	2	5	10	11	33	11

LEADING GOALSCORERS
19 Mario Jardel (Sporting Lisbon)
13 Derlei (Uniao Leiria)

ROMANIA

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	15	9	5	1	36	16	32
National	15	8	6	1	28	11	30
Steaua	15	9	1	5	27	17	28
U Craiova	15	6	5	4	23	19	23
Rapid*	15	8	3	4	23	16	22
Farul	15	6	4	5	20	21	22
Gloria	15	7	1	7	16	19	22
Ceahlaul	15	6	3	6	21	19	21
Otelul	15	5	5	5	14	11	20
Bacau	15	6	2	7	19	23	20
Brasov	15	5	4	6	17	17	19
Astra	15	3	6	6	15	16	15
Arges	15	4	3	8	14	23	15
Petrolul	15	3	4	8	14	28	13
Sportul	15	4	1	10	18	33	13
UM Timisoara	15	3	3	9	14	30	12

**5pts deducted for non-completion of fixture*

SCOTLAND

Saturday, December 8

Dundee Utd 0
Livingston 0 Att: 6,312

Hibernian 1 (O'Neil 7)
Motherwell 1 (Elliott 83) Att: 11,158

Kilmarnock 3 (Dindeleux 12, Boyd 82, Mahood 88)
Aberdeen 1 (Zerouali 60) Att: 7,611

St Johnstone 0
Dundee 2 (Sara 20, Ketsbaia 54) Att: 5,299

Sunday, December 9

Dunfermline 0
Celtic 4 (Balde 8, Hartson 19, 59, Thompson 61) Att: 8,207

Rangers 3 (De Boer 6, Latapy 19, Arveladze 69)
Hearts 1 (McKenna 39) Att: 47,891

Wednesday, December 12

Rangers 1 (Ricksen 58)
Hibernian 1 (Luna 22) Att: 46,179

Saturday, December 15

Celtic 3 (Sutton 50, Larsson 56, Hartson 65)
Dundee 1 (Fan 19) Att: 57,198

Dundee Utd 1 (Easton 30)
Aberdeen 1 (Winters pen 57) Att: 9,129

Dunfermline 1 (Nicholson 74)
Hibernian 0 Att: 6,617

Hearts 2 (Simmons pen 9, Fuller 25)
Kilmarnock 0 Att: 10,027

Livingston 2 (Fernandez 53, Lowndes 80)
St Johnstone 1 (Hartley 48) Att: 4,563

Motherwell 2 (Lasley 16, Kelly pen 80)
Rangers 2 (Arveladze 38, De Boer 63) Att: 9,894

Saturday, December 22

Aberdeen 2 (Winters pen 59, Mackie 90)
Celtic 0 Att: 18,160

Dundee 1 (Rae 48)
Kilmarnock 2 (Mitchell 21, Murray 58) Att: 6,342

Hearts 3 (Fuller 54, 79, McKenna 64)
Motherwell 1 (Elliott 20) Att: 10,674

Livingston 0
Dunfermline 0 Att: 5,326

Rangers 3 (Arveladze 21, 55, Amoruso 44)
Dundee Utd 2 (Thompson 29, 57) Att: 47,315

St Johnstone 0
Hibernian 0 Att: 4,056

Wednesday, December 26

Celtic 3 (Moravcik 12, Larsson 50, 90)
Livingston 2 (Rubio 37, 58) Att: 58,470

Dundee Utd 0
Hearts 2 (Wales 33, Fuller 46) Att: 8,762

Hibernian 0
Rangers 3 (Moore 16, Flo 85, Arveladze pen 88) Att: 14,021

Kilmarnock 0
Dunfermline 0 Att: 6,873

Motherwell 1 (McFadden 90)
St Johnstone 2 (Murray 9, MacDonald 38) Att: 4,659

Saturday, December 29

Dundee Utd 0
Celtic 4 (Hartson 4, Petrov 27, Thompson 47, Larsson 71) Att: 12,165

Dunfermline 1 (Bullen 22)
Aberdeen 0 Att: 7,774

Hearts 1 (McKenna 11)
Hibernian 1 (O'Neil 90) Att: 17,474

Livingston 0
Kilmarnock 1 (Rubio og 35) Att: 5,214

Rangers 1 (Mols 2)
St Johnstone 0 Att: 48,827

Wednesday, January 2

Aberdeen 0
Livingston 3 (Tosh 39, Brinquin 58, Andrews 67) Att: 15,744

Celtic 2 (Larsson 81, Hartson 90)
Motherwell 0 Att: 57,648

Hibernian 0
Dundee Utd 1 (Paterson 87) Att: 11,155

St Johnstone 0
Hearts 2 (Wales 39, Fuller 72) Att: 5,413

ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES — GOLDEN SHOE

ESM GOLDEN SHOE STANDINGS AT 10.01.02

pos	name	team	goals	factor	pts
1	Maksim Gruznov	Trans Narva (Est)	37	1	37
2	Ronald Brunmayr	Grazer AK (Aut)	22	1.5	33
3	Thierry Henry	Arsenal (Eng)	16	2	32
4	Christian Gimenez	Lugano/Basle (Swi)	21	1.5	31.5
5	Mario Jardel	Sporting Lisbon (Por)	19	1.5	28.5
6	Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink	Chelsea (Eng)	14	2	28
7	Wesley Sonck	Genk (Blg)	18	1.5	27
	Dmitriy Vyazmikin	Torpedo Moscow (Rus)	18	1.5	27
9	Ruud Van Nistelrooy	Manchester Utd (Eng)	13	2	26
10	Thorstein Helstad	Brann Bergen (Nor)	17	1.5	25.5
	Frode Johnsen	Rosenborg (Nor)	17	1.5	25.5
	Ricardo Nunez	Grasshopper (Swi)	17	1.5	25.5
	Clayton Zane	Lillestrom (Nor)	17	1.5	25.5
14	Sergei Davydov	Neman-Belkard (Bls)	25	1	25
15	Sasa Bjelanovic	Varteks (Cro)	16	1.5	24
	Marco Di Vaio	Parma (Ita)	12	2	24
	Dario Hubner	Piacenza (Ita)	12	2	24
	Henrik Larsson	Celtic (Sco)	16	1.5	24
	Mihails Miholaps	Skonto Riga (Lat)	24	1	24
	Ivica Olic	Zagreb (Cro)	16	1.5	24
	Pauleta	Bordeaux (Fra)	12	2	24
22	Aleksandr Katasonov	Metalurgs (Lat)	23	1	23
	Andrei Kirlov	Tallinna VMK (Est)	23	1	23
24	Harald Brattbakk	Rosenborg (Nor)	15	1.5	22.5
	Rune Lange	Club Brugge (Blg)	15	1.5	22.5
	Erik Nevland	Viking (Nor)	15	1.5	22.5
	Stefan Selakovic	Halmstads (Swe)	15	1.5	22.5

For the latest standings, updated twice weekly, visit www.worldsoccer.com

Wednesday, January 9

Motherwell 4 (McFadden 8, 86, Ready 25, Elliott 69)
Dundee 2 (Sara pen 33, Kemes 90) Att: 3,573

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Celtic	22	20	1	1	53	11	61
Rangers	22	14	6	2	49	17	48
Livingston	22	11	7	4	33	17	40
Aberdeen	22	10	3	9	31	32	33
Hearts	23	9	4	10	31	28	31
Kilmarnock	22	9	4	9	23	24	31
Dunfermline	22	7	4	11	24	37	25
Dundee Utd	23	6	7	10	23	41	25
Dundee	21	6	5	10	22	34	23
Hibernian	23	5	7	11	27	35	22
Motherwell	23	5	6	12	29	45	21
St Johnstone	23	3	4	16	15	39	13

LEADING GOALSCORERS
16 Henrik Larsson (Celtic)
14 Tore Andre Flo (Rangers)
10 John Hartson (Celtic)
9 Shota Arveladze (Rangers)
9 Robbie Winters (Aberdeen)
8 Hicham Zerouali (Aberdeen)
7 Stuart Elliott (Motherwell)

SCOTTISH CUP – 3rd rnd (last 32)

Jan 5: Deveronvale 0 Ayr 6; Dundee Utd 3 Forres Mechanics 0; Dunfermline 3 Motherwell 1; Hearts 2 Ross County 1; Kilmarnock 3 Airdrie 0; Stranraer 0 Hibernian 0.
Jan 6: Dundee 1 Falkirk 1.
Jan 8: Alloa 0 Celtic 5; Arbroath 0 Inverness Caledonian Thistle 2; Clyde 1 St Mirren 0; East Fife 2 Partick 4; Hamilton 1 Raith 0; St Johnstone 0 Aberdeen 2.

Still to play: Albion v Livingston; Berwick v Rangers; Gala Fairydean v Forfar.

SLOVAKIA

SLOVAKIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zilina	18	11	3	4	32	18	36
Art Petrzalka	18	9	7	2	37	20	34
Inter Bratislava	18	8	8	2	29	17	32
Ruzomberok	18	8	5	5	28	18	29
Matador Puchov	18	7	6	5	24	16	27
Trencin	18	7	4	7	24	29	25
Slovan Bratislava	18	6	6	6	21	22	24
Tatran	18	3	4	11	18	32	13
Kosice	18	2	7	9	13	37	13
Dubnica	18	1	6	11	17	34	9

Continued on page 44

FIFA WORLD PLAYER

FIFA invited every national coach to vote for their World Player of the Year, plus a second and third choice; 130 responded. First-place choices were awarded five points each, runners-up three points and third places one point.

	PLAYER	1st pl	x5pts	2nd pl	x3pts	3rd pl	x1pt	Total pts
1	Luis Figo	27	135	35	105	10	10	250
2	David Beckham	30	150	23	69	19	19	238
3	Raul Gonzalez	10	50	12	36	10	10	96
4	Zinedine Zidane	12	60	9	27	7	7	94
5	Rivaldo	11	55	7	21	16	16	92
6	Juan Sebastian Veron	9	45	6	18	8	8	71
7	Oliver Kahn	8	40	5	15	10	10	65
8	Michael Owen	4	20	11	33	8	8	61
9	Andrii Shevchenko	6	30	4	12	4	4	46
10	Francesco Totti	5	25	4	12	3	3	40
11	Thierry Henry	0	0	3	9	6	6	15
12	Rui Costa	2	10	1	3	1	1	14
13	Patrick Vieira	2	10	1	3	0	0	13
14	Henrik Larsson	1	5	1	3	1	1	9
15	Roberto Carlos	1	5	1	3	0	0	8
	Gabriel Batistuta	0	0	2	6	2	2	8
17	Alen Boksic	1	5	0	0	0	0	5
	Stefan Effenberg	1	5	0	0	0	0	5
19	Hernan Crespo	0	0	1	3	1	1	4
	Ruud Van Nistelrooy	0	0	1	3	1	1	4
	Alessandro Del Piero	0	0	0	0	4	4	4
22	Oscar Cordoba	0	0	1	3	0	0	3
	Gaizka Mendieta	0	0	1	3	0	0	3
	Ebbe Sand	0	0	1	3	0	0	3
	Alessandro Nesta	0	0	0	0	3	3	3
	Javier Saviola	0	0	0	0	3	3	3
27	Giovane Elber	0	0	0	0	2	2	2
	Hidetoshi Nakata	0	0	0	0	2	2	2
29	Carlos Alberto	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Ali Daei	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Steven Gerrard	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Roy Keane	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Luis Enrique	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Emmanuel Olisadebe	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Diego Simeone	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Jon Dahl Tomasson	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
	Sibusiso Zuma	0	0	0	0	1	1	1

HOW THE COACHES VOTED

COUNTRY	COACH	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD
Andorra	David Rodrigo	Zidane	Kahn	Shevchenko
Angola	Mario Calado	Figo	Rivaldo	Beckham
Argentina	Marcelo Bielsa	Raul	Beckham	Nesta
Armenia	Varuzhan Sukiasian	Zidane	Figo	Rivaldo
Austria	Otto Baric	Raul	Henry	Kahn
Azerbaijan	Valeri Hajiyev	Kahn	Figo	Beckham
Bahamas	Gary White (tech. dir.)	Beckham	Raul	Gerrard
Bahrain	Wolfgang Sidka	Kahn	Beckham	Crespo
Bangladesh	George Kottan	Beckham	Rivaldo	Kahn
Barbados	Kenville Layne	Figo	Beckham	Zidane
Belarus	Eduard Malofeyev	Shevchenko	Owen	Veron
Belgium	Robert Waseige	Totti	Raul	Shevchenko
Belize	Eduardo Santana	Veron	O Cordoba	Beckham
Bermuda	Robert Calderon	Raul	Vieira	Totti
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Drago Smajlovic	Kahn	Raul	Henry
Brazil	Luiz Felipe Scolari	Figo	Beckham	Veron
British Virgin Islands	Patrick Mitchell	Veron	Beckham	Rivaldo
Bulgaria	Stoicho Mladenov	Figo	Beckham	Zidane
Burundi	Dominique Niyonzima	Raul	Owen	Beckham
Cambodia	Yean Chheang	Zidane	Figo	Owen
Cameroon	Winfried Schafer	Kahn	Zidane	Beckham
Canada	Holger Osieck	Beckham	Owen	Veron
Cape Verde Islands	Oscar Duarte	Figo	Owen	Rivaldo
Cayman Islands	Marcio Maximo Barcello	Rivaldo	Raul	Owen
Chile	Jorge Garces	Beckham	Rivaldo	Raul
China	Bora Milutinovic	Owen	Figo	Simeone
Colombia	Francisco Maturana	Rivaldo	Totti	Veron
Cook Islands	Maurice Tillotson (tech. dir.)	Beckham	Figo	Owen
Costa Rica	Alexandre Guimaraes	Raul	Figo	Veron
Croatia	Mirko Jozic	Raul	Totti	Figo
Cuba	William Bennet Barrack	Figo	Owen	Raul
Cyprus	Christos Takis Charalambous	Beckham	Owen	Figo
Czech Republic	Jozef Chovanec	Rivaldo	Beckham	Figo
Denmark	Morten Olsen	Figo	Raul	Owen
Djibouti	Mohamed Omar Ali	Figo	Beckham	Shevchenko
Dominican Republic	Juan Emilio Mojica	Beckham	Figo	Veron
Ecuador	Hernan Dario Gomez	Veron	Figo	Saviola
El Salvador	Carlos Humberto Recinos	Figo	Beckham	Kahn
England	Sven Goran Eriksson	Veron	Henry	Nesta
Eritrea	Tekie Abraha	Beckham	Figo	Owen
Estonia	Arno Pijpers	Figo	Beckham	Raul
Ethiopia	Asrat Haile	Figo	Beckham	Owen
Faroe Islands	Allan Simonsen	Rivaldo	Zidane	Figo
Fiji	Billy Singh	Rivaldo	Beckham	Figo

2001: THE FULL VOTE RESULTS

COUNTRY	COACH	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD
Finland	Antti Muurinen	Beckham	Figo	Nesta
France	Roger Lemerre	Owen	Veron	Luis Enrique
Gabon	Alain Da Costa Soares	Vieira	Shevchenko	Figo
Georgia	Alexander Chivadze	Totti	Shevchenko	Beckham
Germany	Rudi Voller	Totti	Beckham	Raul
Greece	Otto Rehhagel	Rivaldo	Beckham	Kahn
Guam	William McFaul	Beckham	Figo	Totti
Holland	Louis Van Gaal	Beckham	Figo	Roy Keane
Honduras	Ramon Maradiaga	Beckham	Veron	Figo
Hong Kong	Tsang Wai-chung	Beckham	Figo	Rivaldo
Hungary	Imre Gellei	Kahn	Owen	Figo
Iceland	Atli Edvaldsson	Effenberg	Mendieta	Figo
India	Sukwinder Singh	Beckham	Figo	Veron
Iran	Miroslav Blazevic	Boksic	Shevchenko	Figo
Israel	Richard Moller Nielsen	Beckham	Raul	Tomasson
Italy	Giovanni Trapattoni	Rui Costa	Crespo	Kahn
Ivory Coast	Bamba Lama	Zidane	Figo	Batistuta
Jamaica	Carl Brown	Zidane	Figo	Henry
Japan	Philippe Troussier	Beckham	Totti	Henry
Jordan	Munem Fakhoury	Beckham	Veron	Zidane
Kazakhstan	Vakhid Massudov	Figo	Kahn	Rivaldo
Kuwait	Berti Vogts	Beckham	Figo	Kahn
Kyrgyzstan	Almaz Chokmorov	Zidane	Shevchenko	H Nakata
Latvia	Aleksandr Starkovs	Totti	Figo	Beckham
Liechtenstein	Ralf Loose	Kahn	Owen	Raul
Lithuania	Benjaminas Zelkevicius	Figo	Beckham	Elber
Luxembourg	Paul Philipp	Owen	Raul	Beckham
Macao	Eiji Ueda	Beckham	Owen	Del Piero
Macedonia	Gjore Jovanovski	Zidane	Figo	Beckham
Malawi	Kim Splidsboel	Beckham	Sand	Zuma
Malaysia	Allan Harris	Figo	Rivaldo	Beckham
Maldives	Abdul Hameed Abdul Ghafoor	Figo	Beckham	Rivaldo
Malta	Sigfried Held	Kahn	Zidane	Elber
Mauritius	Cadrivel Dorasami	Zidane	Rivaldo	Beckham
Mexico	Javier Aguirre	Beckham	Zidane	Raul
Moldova	Alexandru Spiridon	Shevchenko	Kahn	Beckham
Montserrat	Paul Morris	Beckham	Roberto Carlos	Zidane
Morocco	Humberto Coelho	Figo	Rui Costa	Raul
Mozambique	Augusto Matine	Figo	Zidane	Rivaldo
Myanmar	David Booth	Figo	Beckham	Owen
New Zealand	Ken Dugdale	Beckham	Figo	Henry
Nigeria	Shaibu Amodu	Figo	Batistuta	Del Piero
Northern Ireland	Sammy McIlroy	Veron	Figo	Zidane
Norway	Nils Johan Semb	Shevchenko	Beckham	Kahn
Oman	Rashid Jabir	Zidane	Figo	Beckham
Palestine	Ismail Al-Massri	Zidane	Figo	Rivaldo
Panama	Gary Stempel	Beckham	Figo	Zidane
Paraguay	Sergio Markarian	Veron	Beckham	Van Nistelrooy
Peru	Julio Cesar Uribe	Veron	Figo	Rivaldo
Philippines	Masataka Imai	Vieira	Kahn	Shevchenko
Poland	Jerzy Engel	Figo	Beckham	Rivaldo
Portugal	Antonio Oliveira	Raul	Henry	Beckham
Republic of Ireland	Mick McCarthy	Rui Costa	Veron	Olisadebe
Romania	Gheorghe Hagi	Beckham	Figo	Totti
Russia	Mikhail Gershkovich	Shevchenko	Figo	Raul
San Marino	Giampaolo Mazza	Totti	Raul	Owen
Saudi Arabia	Nasser Al-Johar	Rivaldo	Batistuta	Zidane
Scotland	Craig Brown	Raul	Beckham	Larsson
Sierra Leone	Sam Obi Metzger	Beckham	Figo	Rivaldo
Singapore	Jan B Poulsen	Beckham	Veron	Kahn
Slovakia	Jozef Adamec	Rivaldo	Figo	Henry
Slovenia	Srecko Katanec	Figo	Zidane	Del Piero
Solomon Islands	George Cowie	Beckham	Figo	Veron
South Africa	Carlos Queiroz	Figo	Owen	Batistuta
Spain	Jose Antonio Camacho	Roberto Carlos	Figo	Rivaldo
Sudan	Ahmed Babiker Elfaki	Zidane	Rivaldo	Beckham
Surinam	Ronald Kolf	Beckham	Van Nistelrooy	Henry
Swaziland	Dumisa Mahlalela	Owen	Raul	Beckham
Sweden	T Soderberg/L Lagerback	Veron	Beckham	Raul
Switzerland	Jakob Kuhn	Kahn	Owen	Saviola
Syria	Milosav Radenovic	Rivaldo	Beckham	Rui Costa
Taiwan	Huang Jen-chen	Rivaldo	Zidane	H Nakata
Tajikistan	Gafupov Saldkhidin	Shevchenko	Zidane	Daei
Thailand	Peter Withe	Beckham	Larsson	Rivaldo
Tonga	Heinave Kaifa	Figo	Zidane	Saviola
Trinidad & Tobago	Rene Simoes	Figo	Veron	Raul
Tunisia	Khemais Labidi	Rivaldo	Figo	Del Piero
Turkey	Senol Gunes	Zidane	Figo	Rivaldo
Turks & Caicos Is	Charlie Cook	Larsson	Raul	Beckham
Ukraine	Valerii Lobanovskyi	Figo	Raul	Carlos Alberto
United States	Bruce Arena	Figo	Kahn	Beckham
US Virgin Islands	Glad Bugariu	Raul	Rivaldo	Kahn
Uzbekistan	Vladimir Salkov	Shevchenko	Raul	Kahn
Venezuela	Richard A Paez Monzon	Veron	Figo	Rivaldo
Vietnam	Nguyen Sy Hien	Raul	Figo	Beckham
Yugoslavia	Dejan Savicevic	Figo	Totti	Rivaldo

SLOVENIA

SLOVENIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Primorje	20	12	4	4	35	13	40
Koper	20	10	6	4	32	15	36
Maribor	20	10	5	5	33	20	35
Olimpija	20	10	5	5	27	21	35
Smartno	20	7	9	4	31	20	30
Publikum	20	8	5	7	29	24	29
Mura	20	8	4	8	19	23	28
Rudar	20	7	6	7	31	31	27
HIT Gorica	20	6	6	8	18	24	24
Korotan	20	4	4	12	16	31	16
Triglav	20	4	4	12	20	39	16
Domzale	20	2	6	12	18	48	12

SPAIN

Saturday, December 8

Sevilla 3 (Moises 49, Reyes 57, 70)
Athletic Bilbao 3 (Etxeberria 54, Urzaiz 68, Ezquerro 90) Att: 30,000

Tenerife 0
Real Madrid 2 (Ivan Helguera 14, Figo pen 90) Att: 24,000

Sunday, December 9

Barcelona 2 (Gabri 2, Saviola 48)
Celta Vigo 2 (Sergi og 72, Edu 84) Att: 65,000

Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Diego Tristan pen 59)
Valencia 0 Att: 32,000

Mallorca 1 (Nadal 33)
Malaga 1 (Novo og 30) Att: 14,000

Osasuna 1 (Armentano 84)
Valladolid 0 Att: 16,015

Rayo Vallecano 0
Las Palmas 0 Att: 6,000

Real Sociedad 0
Betis 0 Att: 24,000

Villarreal 1 (Calleja 25)
Espanyol 1 (Tamudo 3) Att: 16,000

Zaragoza 0
Alaves 2 (Ruben Navarro 33, 47) Att: 20,000

Saturday, December 15

Espanyol 2 (Palencia 24, Alex Fernandez 44)
Valencia 3 (Rufete 59, 63, Ilie 66) Att: 7,900

Las Palmas 1 (Ruben 87)
Osasuna 1 (Armentano 28) Att: 14,924

Real Madrid 3 (Kvarme og 45, Raul 61, Figo pen 78)
Real Sociedad 1 (Khokhlov 39) Att: 52,712

Sunday, December 16

Alaves 0
Sevilla 1 (Javi Casquero 84) Att: 14,756

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Urzaiz 79)
Rayo Vallecano 1 (Michel 73) Att: 32,000

Betis 1 (Joao Tomas pen 45)
Mallorca 0 Att: 30,000

Celta Vigo 2 (Catanha 5, Gustavo Lopez 75)
Zaragoza 0 Att: 20,000

Malaga 1 (Dario Silva 32)
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Naybet 79) Att: 14,000

Valladolid 0
Tenerife 0 Att: 11,000

Villarreal 0
Barcelona 1 (Kluivert 38) Att: 22,000

Saturday, December 22

Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Makaay 8, Sergio 73)
Betis 0 Att: 27,000

Espanyol 2 (Tamudo 57, 70)
Barcelona 0 Att: 25,100

Real Sociedad 6 (Xabi Alonso 35, Khokhlov 50, De Paula 57, Tayfun 59, 86, Luiz Alberto 84)
Valladolid 0 Att: 19,000

Sevilla 0
Celta Vigo 1 (Catanha 58) Att: 28,000

Tenerife 1 (Lussenhoff 51)
Las Palmas 3 (Tevenet 11, Josico 52, Nacho Gonzalez pen 74) Att: 22,000

Valencia 2 (Roteta og 24, Mista 29)
Malaga 1 (Dario Silva 14) Att: 40,000

Sunday, December 23

Mallorca 1 (Luque 68)
Real Madrid 1 (Raul 55) Att: 20,000

Osasuna 0
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Etxeberria 72) Att: 18,870

Zaragoza 3 (Chainho 16, Vellisca 26, Acuna pen 78)
Villarreal 2 (Victor 54, Jorge Lopez 69) Att: 18,000

Saturday, January 5

Celta Vigo 2 (Catanha 53, Edu 65)
Rayo Vallecano 2 (Bolo 37, Bolic 90) Att: 18,000

Las Palmas 0
Real Sociedad 0 Att: 12,000

Real Madrid 3 (Morientes 6, Zidane 10, Raul 65)
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Makaay pen 8) Att: 70,000

Villarreal 0
Sevilla 2 (Javi Casquero 23, Moises 88) Att: 9,000

Sunday, January 6

Alaves 0
Osasuna 2 (Palacios 52, Jusue 69) Att: 14,227

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Guerrero 79)
Tenerife 2 (Fuertes 72, Marioni 74) Att: 35,000

Barcelona 2 (Kluivert 45, Saviola 55)
Zaragoza 0 Att: 30,000

Betis 1 (Capi 43)
Valencia 3 (Salva 8, Ilie 16, Baraja pen 80) Att: 35,000

Malaga 2 (Duda 34, Dario Silva pen 84)
Espanyol 0 Att: 18,000

Valladolid 2 (Fernando 5, Luis Garcia 59)
Mallorca 1 (Luque 65) Att: 14,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	19	10	5	4	36	22	35
Dep La Coruna	19	10	3	6	33	25	33
Valencia	19	8	9	2	23	16	33
Celta Vigo	19	8	8	3	36	22	32
Athletic Bilbao	19	8	7	4	27	25	31
Betis	19	9	4	6	20	18	31
Barcelona	19	8	6	5	27	17	30
Alaves	18	9	3	6	19	12	30
Sevilla	19	7	6	6	29	22	27
Valladolid	19	7	4	8	20	33	25
Las Palmas	19	6	6	7	20	16	24
Malaga	19	6	6	7	22	24	24
Espanyol	19	7	3	9	24	31	24
Zaragoza	19	7	2	10	18	27	23
Villarreal	19	6	4	9	19	22	22
Osasuna	19	6	4	9	17	24	22
Tenerife	19	6	3	10	14	23	21
Mallorca	19	5	5	9	19	26	20
Real Sociedad	19	5	4	10	23	27	19
Rayo Vallecano	18	3	4	11	18	32	13

LEADING GOALSCORERS

10	Catanha (Celta Vigo)
10	Raul (Real Madrid)
10	Ismael Urzaiz (Athletic Bilbao)
8	Diego Tristan (Deportivo La Coruna)
8	Moises (Sevilla)
8	Javier Saviola (Barcelona)
8	Raul Tamudo (Espanyol)
7	Patrick Kluivert (Barcelona)
7	Alberto Luque (Mallorca)
7	Roy Makaay (Deportivo La Coruna)

SPANISH CUP – quarter-finals

1st legs
Jan 8: Real Madrid 4 Rayo Vallecano 0.
Jan 9: Cordoba 0 Figueres 2; Deportivo La Coruna 2 Valladolid 0; Villarreal 0 Athletic Bilbao 2.

SWITZERLAND

Regular season

Dec 9: Grasshopper 4 Neuchatel Xamax 1; Lugano 1 Aarau 0; Lucerne 0 Basle 1; Servette 1 Lausanne 1; Sion 0 Zurich 1; Young Boys 1 St Gallen 0.

SWITZ'ND: REGULAR SEASON – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle	22	13	4	5	52	37	43
Lugano	22	11	5	6	39	33	38
Grasshopper	22	11	4	7	50	33	37
St Gallen	22	9	8	5	38	32	35
Servette	22	9	7	6	36	29	34
Sion	22	10	3	9	40	29	33
Young Boys	22	8	7	7	35	28	31
Zurich	22	7	9	6	24	27	30
Aarau	22	7	6	9	28	25	27
Neuchatel Xamax	22	6	7	9	28	36	25
Lausanne	22	4	4	14	24	49	16
Lucerne	22	3	4	15	23	59	13

Top eight qualify for championship play-offs; bottom four go into relegation/promotion play-offs

TURKEY

Dec 7: Besiktas 1 Genclerbirligi 0.
Dec 8: Istanbulspor 1 Denizlispor 1; Bursaspor 1 Malatyaspor 0; Goztepe 1 Gaziantepspor 3; Trabzonspor 2 Fenerbahce 1.
Dec 9: Ankaragucu 2 Galatasaray 1; Rizespor 1 Samsunspor 0; Diyarbakirspor 3 Antalyaspor 1; Yozgatspor 4 Kocaelispor 0.
Dec 14: Fenerbahce 3 Bursaspor 1.
Dec 15: Gaziantepspor 3 Yozgatspor 2; Goztepe 0 Besiktas 6; Antalyaspor 1 Samsunspor 1; Denizlispor 3 Ankaragucu 4.
Dec 16: Rizespor 1 Istanbulspor 1; Genclerbirligi 1 Trabzonspor 1; Malatyaspor 0 Diyarbakirspor 3.
Dec 21: Diyarbakirspor 2 Fenerbahce 1.
Dec 22: Besiktas 3 Gaziantepspor 1; Malatyaspor 1 Samsunspor 3; Trabzonspor 3 Goztepe 0; Kocaelispor 2 Denizlispor 1; Ankaragucu 1 Rizespor 1; Istanbulspor 4 Antalyaspor 1; Bursaspor 0 Genclerbirligi 1.
Dec 23: Yozgatspor 3 Galatasaray 3.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Besiktas	17	11	3	3	45	23	36
Galatasaray	16	11	3	2	41	22	36
Fenerbahce	17	11	1	5	36	19	34
Istanbulspor	17	9	3	5	19	15	30
Gaziantepspor	17	8	4	5	25	19	28
Ankaragucu	17	8	3	6	40	28	27
Bursaspor	17	8	2	7	22	26	26
Trabzonspor	17	7	4	6	28	21	25
Kocaelispor	16	7	4	5	23	21	25
Diyarbakirspor	17	6	3	8	28	32	21
Goztepe	17	5	5	7	13	30	20
Rizespor	17	4	7	6	20	22	19
Denizlispor	17	4	6	7	30	25	18
Samsunspor	17	5	3	9	16	26	18
Antalyaspor	17	4	5	8	24	39	17
Yozgatspor	17	4	4	9	24	32	16
Genclerbirligi	17	3	6	8	24	34	15
Malatyaspor	17	4	0	13	13	37	12

UKRAINE

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamo	13	10	3	0	31	5	33
Shakhtar	13	10	3	0	29	8	33
Karpaty	13	7	3	3	17	14	24
Metalurh D	13	6	4	3	22	11	22
Metalist	13	6	2	5	18	19	20
Metalurh Z	13	5	3	5	11	12	18
Dnipro	13	4	5	4	12	12	17
Metalurh M	13	4	3	6	14	18	15
Poligraftekhnika	13	3	5	5	11	17	14
CSKA	13	4	1	8	11	15	13
Kryvbas	13	3	4	6	16	26	13
Tavriya	13	3	2	8	13	24	11
Vorskla	13	2	3	8	7	16	9
Zakarpattya	13	2	3	8	15	30	9

YUGOSLAVIA

Dec 8: Radnicki K 3 Mladost A 0; Partizan 3 Sutjeska 1; Mladost L 3 Obilic 1; Hajduk K 3 Zvezdara 1; Zemun 0 OFK 0; Rudar P 0 Vojvodina 0; Zeta 2 Sartid 2; Zeleznik 3 Rad 0; Cukaricki 2 Red Star 0.

YUGOSLAVIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	17	11	5	1	36	17	38
Red Star	17	9	6	2	26	14	33
Obilic	17	9	3	5	33	25	30
Sartid	17	8	5	4	21	16	29
Vojvodina	17	6	10	1	20	11	28
Hajduk K	17	6	5	6	19	19	23
Mladost L	17	6	4	7	19	19	22
Rad	17	6	4	7	20	21	22
Zeleznik	17	6	4	7	21	23	22
Zvezdara	17	5	6	6	21	20	21
OFK	17	5	5	7	22	18	20
Zemun	17	5	5	7	16	20	20
Sutjeska	17	6	2	9	16	22	20
Zeta	17	5	4	8	18	30	19
Cukaricki	17	4	6	7	18	20	18
Rudar P	17	4	6	7	14	16	18
Radnicki K	17	4	5	8	16	27	17
Mladost A	17	2	7	8	15	33	13

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP 2002

MATCH SCHEDULE

1st rnd

Group 1

Feb 5: Alianza Lima (Per) v Cerro Porteno (Par)
Feb 6: Cobreloa (Chl) v Sao Caetano (Bra)
Feb 13: Sao Caetano v Alianza Lima
Feb 19: Cerro Porteno v Cobreloa
Feb 26: Cobreloa v Alianza Lima
Mar 5: Cerro Porteno v Sao Caetano
Mar 13: Cerro Porteno v Alianza Lima
Mar 14: Sao Caetano v Cobreloa
Mar 28: Alianza Lima v Sao Caetano
Apr 4: Cobreloa v Cerro Porteno
Apr 10: Sao Caetano v Cerro Porteno
Apr 10: Alianza Lima v Cobreloa

Group 2

Feb 7: Oriente Petrolero (Bol) v Gremio (Bra)
Feb 7: Cienciano (Per) v 12 de Octubre (Par)
Feb 13: Oriente Petrolero v Cienciano
Feb 20: 12 de Octubre v Oriente Petrolero
Feb 20: Gremio v Cienciano
Feb 28: Gremio v Oriente Petrolero
Mar 12: 12 de Octubre v Gremio
Mar 19: 12 de Octubre v Cienciano
Apr 2: Oriente Petrolero v 12 de Octubre
Apr 3: Cienciano v Gremio
Apr 9: Gremio v 12 de Octubre
Apr 9: Cienciano v Oriente Petrolero

Group 3

Feb 5: Real Potosi (Bol) v San Lorenzo (Arg)
Feb 5: El Nacional (Ecu) v Penarol (Uru)
Feb 19: Penarol v Real Potosi
Feb 26: San Lorenzo v El Nacional
Mar 5: Real Potosi v El Nacional
Mar 6: Penarol v San Lorenzo
Mar 12: Penarol v El Nacional
Mar 12: San Lorenzo v Real Potosi
Mar 19: Real Potosi v Penarol
Mar 19: El Nacional v San Lorenzo
Apr 9: San Lorenzo v Penarol
Apr 9: El Nacional v Real Potosi

Group 4

Feb 5: Atletico Paranaense (Bra) v Bolivar (Bol)
Feb 7: America (Col) v Olmedo (Ecu)
Feb 12: Bolivar v America
Feb 19: Olmedo v Atletico Paranaense
Feb 27: Atletico Paranaense v America
Feb 28: Olmedo v Bolivar
Mar 5: Olmedo v America
Mar 12: Bolivar v Atletico Paranaense
Mar 19: Atletico Paranaense v Olmedo

Mar 21: America v Bolivar
Mar 26: Bolivar v Olmedo
Mar 27: America v Atletico Paranaense

Group 5

Feb 5: Atletico Morelia (Mex) v Velez Sarsfield (Arg)
Feb 6: Sporting Cristal (Per) v Nacional (Uru)
Feb 21: Nacional v Atletico Morelia
Feb 26: Velez Sarsfield v Sporting Cristal
Mar 5: Nacional v Velez Sarsfield
Mar 5: Atletico Morelia v Sporting Cristal
Mar 13: Velez Sarsfield v Atletico Morelia
Mar 14: Nacional v Sporting Cristal
Mar 20: Sporting Cristal v Velez Sarsfield
Apr 4: Atletico Morelia v Nacional
Apr 11: Sporting Cristal v Atletico Morelia
Apr 11: Velez Sarsfield v Nacional

Group 6

Feb 6: Montevideo Wanderers (Uru) v Emelec (Ecu)
Feb 13: Boca Juniors (Arg) v Santiago Wanderers (Chl)
Feb 19: Santiago Wanderers v Montevideo Wanderers
Feb 27: Emelec v Boca Juniors
Mar 6: Boca Juniors v Montevideo Wanderers
Mar 6: Emelec v Santiago Wanderers
Mar 13: Emelec v Montevideo Wanderers
Mar 14: Santiago Wanderers v Boca Juniors
Mar 20: Montevideo Wanderers v Santiago Wanderers
Mar 20: Boca Juniors v Emelec
Apr 10: Montevideo Wanderers v Boca Juniors
Apr 10: Santiago Wanderers v Emelec

Group 7

Feb 6: America (Mex) v Talleres Cordoba (Arg)
Feb 14: River Plate (Arg) v Talleres Cordoba
Feb 20: Tulua (Col) v America
Feb 27: Talleres Cordoba v Tulua
Feb 28: River Plate v America
Mar 7: River Plate v Tulua
Mar 12: Tulua v Talleres Cordoba
Mar 13: America v River Plate
Mar 21: Talleres Cordoba v America
Mar 21: Tulua v River Plate
Apr 11: Talleres Cordoba v River Plate
Apr 11: America v Tulua

Group 8

Feb 6: Once Caldas (Col) v Flamengo (Bra)
Feb 14: Flamengo v Universidad Catolica (Chl)
Feb 21: Olimpia (Par) v Once Caldas
Feb 27: Universidad Catolica v Olimpia
Feb 27: Flamengo v Once Caldas
Mar 6: Flamengo v Olimpia
Mar 7: Once Caldas v Universidad Catolica
Mar 13: Universidad Catolica v Flamengo
Mar 19: Once Caldas v Olimpia
Apr 2: Olimpia v Universidad Catolica
Apr 10: Olimpia v Flamengo
Apr 10: Universidad Catolica v Once Caldas

2nd rnd

2nd Group 8 v 1st Group 1 (A)
2nd Group 7 v 1st Group 2 (B)
2nd Group 6 v 1st Group 3 (C)
2nd Group 5 v 1st Group 4 (D)
2nd Group 4 v 1st Group 5 (E)
2nd Group 3 v 1st Group 6 (F)
2nd Group 2 v 1st Group 7 (G)
2nd Group 1 v 1st Group 8 (H)
1st legs, Apr 17; 2nd legs, May 1

Quarter-finals

Winners C v Winners A (Q1)
Winners B v Winners D (Q2)
Winners E v Winners G (Q3)
Winners F v Winners H (Q4)
1st legs, May 8; 2nd legs, May 15

Semi-finals

Winners Q1 v Winners Q3
Winners Q4 v Winners Q2
1st legs, July 10; 2nd legs, July 17

Final

1st leg, July 24; 2nd leg, July 31

MERCOSUR CUP

Final, 1st leg

Dec 12 - Rio de Janeiro
Flamengo (Bra) 0
San Lorenzo (Arg) 0
Att: 81,000. **Ref:** Gonzalez (Par)
Sent off: Edilson (Flamengo) 46min

MERCONORTE CUP

Final, 1st leg

Dec 13 - Bogota
Millonarios (Col) 1 (Castro 76)
Emelec (Ecu) 1 (Tenorio 74)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Solorzano (Ven)
Sent off: Juarez (Emelec) 86min

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 20 - Guayaquil
Emelec 1 (Tenorio 50)
Millonarios 1 (Jaramillo 29)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Hidalgo (Per)
Agg 2-2. Millonarios 3-1 on pens

ARGENTINA

Friday, December 7

Independiente 1 (Silvera 8)
Nueva Chicago 0

Saturday, December 8

Belgrano Cordoba 1 (Lopez 4)
Union Santa Fe 1 (Frutos 90)

Chacarita Juniors 0
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Yaque 45)

Colon Santa Fe 3 (Delgado 26, Graf 80, Castillo 82)
Talleres Cordoba 0

Sunday, December 9

Banfield 0
Racing Club 0

Gimnasia LP 2 (Sava 33, Messera 70)
Rosario Central 2 (Pizzi 18, 71)

Newell's Old Boys 1 (Pavlovich 73)
Estudiantes 2 (Farias pen 7, Pompei 70)

River Plate 4 (D'Alessandro pen 4, Cambiasso 6, Alvarez 16, Cardetti pen 63)
Lanus 0

San Lorenzo 0
Huracan 1 (Villa 54)

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Fuentes 29, Husain 50)
Boca Juniors 2 (Barijho 20, Barros Schelotto pen 61)

Friday, December 14

Banfield 1 (Lujambio 81)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Dudar 4)

Saturday, December 15

Estudiantes 2 (Maggiolo 56, 75)
Belgrano Cordoba 0

Huracan 0
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Gigena pen 3)

Rosario Central 1 (Pizzi 83)
Chacarita Juniors 1 (Mas 9)

Union Santa Fe 1 (Wernly 47)
San Lorenzo 2 (Rivarola pen 34, Bevacqua 80)

Sunday, December 16

Argentinos Juniors 1 (Yaque 41)
River Plate 3 (Ortega 27, Yepes 72, Cavenaghi 90)

RECENT TRANSFERS

	POS	FROM	TO
ALFONSO	F	Barcelona	Marseille (loan)
Nicolas ANELKA	F	Paris Saint-Germain	Liverpool (loan)
Arkadiusz BAK	M	Polonia Warsaw	Birmingham (loan)
Milan BAROS	F	Banik Ostrava	Liverpool
Laurent BATLLES	M	Bordeaux	Rennes
Roman BEREZOVSKI	G	Torpedo Moscow	Dinamo Moscow
Tommy BERGERSEN	F	Start	Sundsvall
Tommy BERNTSEN	D	Eintracht Frankfurt	Lyn Oslo
Fredi BOBIC	F	Borussia Dortmund	Bolton (loan)
Dragan BOGAVAC	F	Rudar Pljevlja	Red Star Belgrade
Jeremy BON	G	Bordeaux	Bolton
Tomas BRUSHKO	M	Dubnica	Kyiv Dynamo
Cyril CHAPUIS	F	Rennes	Marseille
Sirajeddine CHIHI	M	Esperance	Al Wahda (UAE)
Andrew COLE	F	Manchester United	Blackburn
Jurgen COLIN	D	PSV Eindhoven	Genk (loan)
Oscar CORDOBA	G	Boca Juniors	Perugia (loan)
Diego CROSA	D	Betis	Boca Juniors
Dennis DE NOOIJER	F	Heerenveen	NEC Nijmegen (loan)
Pascal DELHOMMEAU	D	Nantes	Lorient (loan)
Pape Bouba DIOP	M	Grasshopper	Lens
Dusko DJURISIC	D	Sion	Sedan
Fabrice FERNANDES	F	Rennes	Southampton
FERNANDO MEIRA	D	Benfica	Stuttgart
Frantisek GANZ	D	Kosice	Karpaty Lviv
GAUCHO	F	Levski Sofia	Kryliya Sovetov
Vladan GRUJIC	M	Borac Banja Luka	Red Star Belgrade
Fredrik GUSTAFSSON	M	Halmstads	Molde
HAKAN Sukur	F	Internazionale	Parma
Jonny HANSSEN	M	Tromso	Lyn Oslo
Andy HERZOG	M	Werder Bremen	Rapid Wien
Matti HIUKKA	F	HJK Helsinki	Tampere United
Ivica JANCEVIC	M	OFK Belgrade	Karpaty Lviv
Joseph-Desire JOB	F	Middlesbrough	Metz (loan)
JUNINHO Paulista	M	Vasco da Gama	Atl Madrid (end of loan)
JUNIOR BAIANO	D	Shanghai Shenhua	Internacional (P Alegre)
Kim KALLSTROM	M	Hacken	Djurgardens
David KANNEMEYER	D	Ajax Cape Town	Kaizer Chiefs
Ivan KAVIEDES	F	Celta Vigo	FC Porto (loan)
Aleksandar KOCIC	G	Red Star Belgrade	Ethnikos Akhna
Darko KOVACEVIC	F	Lazio	Real Sociedad
Vladimir LABANT	D	Sparta Prague	West Ham (loan)
Lilian LASLANDES	F	Sunderland	Koln (loan)
Ludovic MAGNIN	D	Lugano	Werder Bremen
Amedeo MANGONE	D	Parma	Brescia (loan)
Silvio MARIC	F	Free agent	Dinamo Zagreb
Benni McCARTHY	F	Celta Vigo	FC Porto (loan)
Sinisa MIHAJLOVIC	D	Lazio	Fiorentina
Kenny MILLER	F	Rangers	Wolves
Ruslan NIGMATULLIN	G	Lokomotiv Moscow	Verona
Akinori NISHIZAWA	F	Bolton	Cerezo Osaka (end of loan)
Stian OHR	M	Start	Valerenga
Chris OKOH	M	Pieta Hotspurs	Birkirkara
Salomon OLEMBE	M	Nantes	Marseille (loan)
Alexander PANOV	F	Saint-Etienne	Dinamo Moscow
Rafal PAWLAK	M	Widzew Lodz	Ionikos
Igor PETKOVIC	D	Mladost Apatin	Kyiv Dynamo
Juan Antonio PIZZI	F	Rosario Central	Villarreal (loan)
Antti POHJA	F	Tampere United	Hammarby
Julien POUEYS	F	Sion	Sedan
Mikko RAHKAMAA	G	Jokerit	Twente
Olav RASTAD	M	Tromso	Bodo/Glimt
Alberto RIVERA	F	Real Madrid	Marseille (loan)
Paulus ROIHA	F	HJK Helsinki	Utrecht
Jerome ROTHEN	M	Troyes	Monaco
Ousmane SANOU	F	Willem II	Sparta Rotterdam
Martin SARIC	D	Nueva Chicago	Zagreb
Stefan SELAKOVIC	F	Halmstads	Heerenveen
Vadim SKRIPCHENKO	D	Uralan	BATE Borisov
Marius STANKEVICIUS	D	Ekranas	Brescia
Sharbel TOUMA	M	AIK Stockholm	Halmstads
Vesa VASARA	M	Jokerit	Kalmar
Ivan VUKOMANOVIC	D	Bordeaux	Rad Belgrade (loan)
Daniel WANSI	F	Cintra Yaounde	Etoile Sahel
Sander WESTERVELD	G	Liverpool	Real Sociedad
Fredrik WINSNES	M	Rosenborg	Hammarby (loan)
Tony YEBOAH	F	Hamburg	Al Ittihad (Qat)
Mario YEPES	D	River Plate (Arg)	Nantes

Boca Juniors 5 (Barijho 11, Schiavi 13, Riquelme 41, 87, Barros Schelotto 52)
Independiente 3 (Vuoso 32, Eluchans 71, Forlan 81)

Nueva Chicago 3 (Jesus 23, Gomez 72, Mandra 90)
Newell's Old Boys 2 (Rosales 59, Real 67)

Racing Club 2 (Maceratesi 26, Chatruc 90)
Lanus 0

Talleres Cordoba 4 (Monrroy 30, La Paglia 40, pen 60, Garay 57)
Gimnasia LP 1 (Sava 50)

Thursday, December 27

River Plate 6 (Cardetti 2, 49, pen 54, Guillermo Pereyra 42, Ortega 59, Alvarez 85)
Rosario Central 1 (De Bruno 20)

Velez Sarsfield 1 (Chirumbolo 78)
Racing Club 1 (Loeschbor 54)

ARGENTINA – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Racing Club	19	12	6	1	34	17	42
River Plate	19	12	5	2	51	16	41
Boca Juniors	18	9	5	4	39	25	32
Colon Santa Fe	18	8	7	3	24	16	31
San Lorenzo	18	8	6	4	26	20	30
Chacarita Jnrs	18	6	8	4	28	23	26
Independiente	18	7	5	6	26	25	26
Belgrano Cordoba	18	6	8	4	16	16	26
Estudiantes	18	7	5	6	25	26	26
Gimnasia LP	18	7	5	6	28	33	26
Argentinos Jnrs	18	7	4	7	22	26	25
Newell's OB	18	6	4	8	27	26	22
Velez Sarsfield	19	5	7	7	27	30	22
Lanus	18	6	4	8	20	28	22
Nueva Chicago	18	6	3	9	24	32	21
Rosario Central	19	5	5	9	18	26	20
Union Santa Fe	18	3	8	7	23	25	17
Banfield	18	3	6	9	13	24	15
Huracan	18	3	4	11	20	37	13
Talleres Cordoba	18	3	1	14	17	37	10

LEADING GOALSCORERS
17 Martin Cardetti (River Plate)
11 Diego Forlan (Independiente)
11 Facundo Sava (Gimnasia LP)
10 Ernesto Farias (Estudiantes)
9 Esteban Cambiasso (River Plate)

BOLIVIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Semi-final group

Dec 5: Bolivar 1 Real Potosi 1; Jorge Wilstermann 1 Oriente 2.
Dec 9: Real Potosi 1 Jorge Wilstermann 0; Oriente 2 Bolivar 0.

BOLIVIA: CLOSING SEMI-FNL GP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Oriente	6	4	1	1	14	9	13
Real Potosi	6	2	2	2	13	15	8
Bolivar	6	1	3	2	8	9	6
J Wilstermann	6	1	2	3	7	9	5

Oriente win closing championship; entered championship play-offs against opening winners Bolivar

CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS

Dec 12: Bolivar 4 Oriente 1.
Dec 16: Oriente 4 Bolivar 3.
Dec 19: Oriente 2 Bolivar 0.
Oriente won two legs to one

BRAZIL

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Quarter-finals

Dec 5: Sao Caetano 0 Bahia 0 (aet; Sao Caetano qualified on better League stage record); Atletico Paranaense 2 Sao Paulo 1; Fluminense 2 Ponte Preta 1 (aet); Atletico Mineiro 3 Gremio 0.

Semi-finals

Dec 9: Sao Caetano 2 Atletico Mineiro 1; Atletico Paranaense 3 Fluminense 2.

Final

1st leg - Dec 16 - Curitiba
Atletico Paranaense 4 (Ilan 4, Alex Mineiro 55, 79, 90)
Sao Caetano 2 (Mancini 31, Marcos Paulo 53)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 31,740. **Ref:** Simon

2nd leg - Dec 23 - Sao Caetano do Sul
Sao Caetano 0
Atletico Paranaense 1 (Alex Mineiro 66)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Simon
Atletico 5-2 on agg

CHILE

Dec 7: Coquimbo Unido 1 Rangers 1.
Dec 8: San Felipe 1 Palestino 2; Union Espanola 2 U de Chile 1; Dep Concepcion 3 Huachipato 3; Santiago Morning 4 Puerto Montt 1; Cobreloa 2 O'Higgins 0.
Dec 9: Audax Italiano 2 Santiago Wanderers 4; Colo Colo 4 U Catolica 1.

CHILE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sant Wanderers	30	20	6	4	65	32	66
U Catolica	30	18	6	6	60	29	60
U de Chile	30	17	6	7	53	33	57
Colo Colo	30	16	8	6	63	37	56
Cobreloa	30	13	9	8	39	28	48
Palestino	30	14	6	10	44	43	48
Huachipato	30	12	10	8	58	42	46
San Felipe	30	10	10	10	45	39	40
Union Espanola	30	10	7	13	46	63	37
Coquimbo Unido	30	9	8	13	29	39	35
Audax Italiano	30	10	2	18	27	40	32
Dep Concepcion	30	8	8	14	35	51	32
Rangers	30	6	12	12	38	46	30
Sant Morning	30	7	7	16	47	67	28
O'Higgins	30	7	4	19	39	64	25
Puerto Montt	30	4	9	17	31	66	21

Relegated: O'Higgins, Puerto Montt

COLOMBIA

CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS

Dec 9: Millonarios 2 Once Caldas 3; America 0 Indep Santa Fe 0; Tulua 1 Dep Cali 0; Tolima 1 Indep Medellin 2.
Dec 12: Indep Santa Fe 1 Millonarios 1; Once Caldas 2 America 2; Dep Cali 2 Tolima 1; Indep Medellin 3 Tulua 0.

COLOMBIA: PLAY-OFFS – GP A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America	6	2	4	0	8	5	10
Once Caldas	6	2	3	1	10	10	9
Indep Santa Fe	6	1	5	0	6	4	8
Millonarios	6	0	2	4	3	8	2

COLOMBIA: PLAY-OFFS – GP B – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Indep Medellin	6	3	2	1	9	5	11
Tulua	6	3	1	2	5	5	10
Dep Cali	6	2	2	2	5	5	8
Tolima	6	1	1	4	5	9	4

Final

1st leg - Dec 16
Indep Medellin 0
America 1 (Vasquez 66)
HT: 0-0

2nd leg - Dec 19
America 2 (Mafla 34, Vasquez 41)
Indep Medellin 0
HT: 2-0
America 3-0 on agg

ECUADOR

CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS

Dec 9: Olmedo 1 El Nacional 0; Dep Quito 0 Emelec 3; Barcelona 2 Espoli 1.
Dec 11: Emelec 2 Olmedo 1.
Dec 12: El Nacional 2 Barcelona 0; Dep Quito 1 Espoli 0.
Dec 16: Emelec 1 Barcelona 0; Espoli 0 El Nacional 3; Olmedo 4 Dep Quito 1.
Dec 18: Espoli 3 Emelec 1.
Dec 19: Barcelona 1 Olmedo 1; El Nacional 1 Dep Quito 0.
Dec 23: Emelec 1 El Nacional 0; Dep Quito 1 Barcelona 0; Olmedo 1 Espoli 0.

ECUADOR: CH'SHIP PLAY-OFFS – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	
Emelec	10	6	1	3	13	11	22	[3]
El Nacional	10	5	3	2	16	5	21	[3]
Olmedo	10	5	4	1	15	8	20	[1]
Barcelona	10	2	3	5	6	10	11	[2]
Dep Quito	10	3	2	5	9	18	11	[0]
Espoli	10	1	3	6	8	15	8	[2]

Bonus points from opening and closing championships in brackets

PERU

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Dec 8: Sport Boys 1 Alianza Lima 1.
Dec 9: Cienciano 1 Melgar 0; Estudiantes 0 Dep Wanka 2; Universitario 1 Sporting Cristal 3; Coopsol Trujillo 0 Alianza Atletico 1; Union Minas 2 Juan Aurich 2.
Dec 12: Alianza Atletico 3 Sport Boys 1; Melgar 2 Universitario 0.
Dec 16: Alianza Lima 1 Estudiantes 2; Sporting Cristal 8 Union Minas 3; Dep Wanka 1 Coopsol Trujillo 4; Juan Aurich 1 Cienciano 1.

PERU: CLOSING – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cienciano	22	14	3	5	39	30	45
Estudiantes	22	14	3	5	35	26	45
Sporting Cristal	22	14	2	6	44	25	44
Alianza Atletico	22	11	3	8	25	24	36
Sport Boys	22	9	5	8	29	31	32
Universitario	22	8	7	7	29	24	31
Dep Wanka	22	8	4	10	22	27	28
Melgar	22	8	2	12	30	31	26
Coopsol Trujillo	22	6	7	9	35	35	25
Alianza Lima	22	4	9	9	25	28	21
Union Minas	22	5	5	12	27	42	20
Juan Aurich	22	3	6	13	22	39	15

Play-off*

Dec 19: Cienciano 1 Estudiantes 0.
**Staged because Cienciano and Estudiantes finished level on points*

CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFF

1st leg - Dec 22
Alianza Lima 3 (Saenz 20, Soto 57, Farfan 90)
Cienciano 2 (Cumapa 29, Zapata pen 35)
HT: 1-2

2nd leg - Dec 26
Cienciano 1 (Rodriguez 83)
Alianza Lima 0
HT: 0-0
Agg 3-3. Alianza 4-2 on pens

VENEZUELA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Dec 9: Monagas 2 Caracas 0; Ital-Chacao 1 Portuguesa 0; Nacional 1 Dep Tachira 1; Trujillanos 1 Mineros Guayana 2; Galicia 1 Estudiantes 3.
Dec 16: Estudiantes 2 Monagas 0; Mineros Guayana 3 Galicia 1; Dep Tachira 1 Trujillanos 1; Portuguesa 0 Nacional 2; Caracas 3 Ital-Chacao 2.

VENEZUELA: OPENING – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Estudiantes	18	9	6	3	34	19	33
Monagas	18	9	4	5	24	17	31
Dep Tachira	18	7	8	3	28	17	29
Nacional	18	7	7	4	27	18	28
Mineros Guayana	18	8	4	6	27	29	28
Caracas	18	6	6	6	32	23	24
Trujillanos	18	4	10	4	28	27	22
Ital-Chacao	18	6	3	9	23	25	21
Portuguesa	18	4	4	10	17	39	16
Galicia	18	3	2	13	18	44	11

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

GOLD CUP 2002

SCHEDULE

In the United States

Group A

Jan 19 - El Salvador v Mexico (Pasadena)
Jan 21 - Mexico v Guatemala (Pasadena)
Jan 23 - Guatemala v El Salvador (Pasadena)

Group B

Jan 19 - United States v South Korea (Pasadena)
Jan 21 - Cuba v United States (Pasadena)
Jan 23 - South Korea v Cuba (Pasadena)

Group C

Jan 18 - Martinique v Costa Rica (Miami)
Jan 20 - Costa Rica v Trinidad & Tobago (Miami)
Jan 22 - Trinidad & Tobago v Martinique (Miami)

Group D

Jan 18 - Haiti v Canada (Miami)
Jan 20 - Ecuador v Haiti (Miami)
Jan 22 - Canada v Ecuador (Miami)

Quarter-finals

Jan 26 - (1) Gp C 1st v Gp D 2nd (Miami)
Jan 26 - (2) Gp D 1st v Gp C 2nd (Miami)
Jan 27 - (3) Gp A 1st v Gp B 2nd (Pasadena)
Jan 27 - (4) Gp B 1st v Gp A 2nd (Pasadena)

Semi-finals

Jan 30 - Winners (1) v Winners (3) (Pasadena)
Jan 30 - Winners (2) v Winners (4) (Pasadena)

Third-place play-off

Feb 2 - *In Pasadena*

Final

Feb 2 - *In Pasadena*

MEXICO

WINTER LEAGUE

Semi-finals

2nd legs
Dec 8: Toluca 2 Pachuca 4 *Pachuca 5-3 on agg;* Tigres 1 Cruz Azul 0 *Agg 1-1. Tigres qualified on better League stage record.*

Final

1st leg - Dec 12
Pachuca 2 (Silvani 23, Santana 28)
Tigres 0
HT: 2-0

2nd leg - Dec 15
Tigres 1 (Olalde 19)
Pachuca 1 (Silvani 61)
HT: 1-0
Pachuca 3-1 on agg

AFRICA

2001 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Final, 1st leg

Dec 8 - Pretoria
Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf) 1 (Kampamba 26)
Al Ahly (Egy) 1 (Abdelhafiz 58)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Codja (Ben)
Sundowns: Tlale - Manzini, McCarthy, Booth, Mohlala - Mnguni, Kampamba, Semake (Qaba 71), Mudau (Ndlovu 65) - Scott, Marumo (Masilela 83).
Al Ahly: Al-Hadary - Mosalem, Mostafa, Mohamed, El Sayed, Khashaba - Abdelhafiz (Hanafi 81) - Ghali, Ibeji - Maher (Salaheddine 72), Farouk (Ibrahim 86).

Final, 2nd leg

Dec 21 - Cairo
Al Ahly 3 (Bebo pen 37, 44, 89)
Mamelodi Sundowns 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 80,000. **Ref:** El Arjoun (Mor)
Al Ahly 4-1 on agg
Al Ahly: Al-Hadary - Mohamed, Mostafa, Said, Mosalem, Gomaa - Abdelhafiz (Khashaba 63), Ghali, Ibeji (Riad 84) - Farouk (Salaheddine 79), Bebo.
Sundowns: Tlale - Manzini, McCarthy, Booth - Motlohi, Kampamba, Mnguni, Shai - Mudau - Scott (Ndlovu 78; Masilela 89), Marumo.

2002 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

DRAW

Preliminary rnd

Olympique de Moka (Mrs) v Stade Olympic de l'Emyrne (Mad); Prince Louis (Brd) v Costa do Sol (Moz); APR FC (Rwa) v Hintra (Eri); Simba SC (Tan) v Red Star (Sey); Horoya (Gui) v Wallidan (Gam); Dyto de Lome (Tog) v Tourbillon (Chd); Akonangui (EqG) v Olympic Real Bangui (CAR); Lesotho Defence Force (Les) v Mogoditshane Life Fighters (Bot); EEPCO (Eth) v Oserian Fastac (Ken).
1st legs, Feb 1-3; 2nd legs, Feb 15-17

1st rnd

Petro Atletico (Ang) v Olympique de Moka or Stade Olympic de l'Emyrne; Highlanders (Zim) v Prince Louis or Costa do Sol; ASEC Abidjan (IvC) v FC 105 Libreville (Gab); Enyimba (Nig) v Etoile Filante (BuF); Zamalek (Egy) v APR FC or Hintra; Nkana FC (Zam) v Simba SC or Red Star; Raja Casablanca (Mor) v Horoya or Wallidan; Cotonsport (Cam) v Etoile du Congo (Con); Esperance (Tun) v Dyto de Lome or Tourbillon; Al Madina (Lby) v Akonangui or Olympic Real Bangui; Hearts of Oak (Gha) v Stade Malien (Mli); Chabab Belouizdad (Alg) v Jeanne d'Arc (Sen); TP Mazembe (DRC) v Lesotho Defence Force or Mogoditshane Life Fighters; Orlando Pirates (SAf) v St Louisienne (Reu); Al Ahly (Egy, holders) v EEPCO or Oserian Fastac; Al Merreikh (Sud) v SC Villa (Uga).
1st legs, Mar 8-10; 2nd legs, Mar 22-24

2nd rnd

Petro Atletico or Olympique de Moka or Stade Olympic de l'Emyrne v Highlanders or Prince Louis or Costa do Sol;
ASEC Abidjan or FC 105 Libreville v Enyimba or Etoile Filante;
Zamalek or APR FC or Hintra v Nkana FC or Simba SC or Red Star;
Raja Casablanca or Horoya or Wallidan v Cotonsport or Etoile du Congo;
Esperance or Dyto de Lome or Tourbillon v Al Madina or Akonangui or Olympic Real Bangui;
Hearts of Oak or Stade Malien v Chabab Belouizdad or Jeanne d'Arc;
TP Mazembe or Lesotho Defence Force or Mogoditshane Life Fighters v Orlando Pirates or St Louisienne;
Al Ahly or EEPCO or Oserian Fastac v Al Merreikh or SC Villa.
1st legs, Apr 12-14; 2nd legs, Apr 26-28

The eight winners go into the draw for the Champions League group phase, to be conducted in July.

2002 CUP-WINNERS CUP

DRAW

Preliminary rnd

Akokana (Ngr) v Gazelle (Chd); Atletico Malabo (EqG) v Sara de Eafilo (Tog); Les Citadins (Rwa) v Stade Centrafricain (CAR); Polisi Zanzibar (Tan) v Guna SC (Eth); US Beau Bassin-Rose Hill (Mrs) v Extension Gunners (Bot).
1st legs, Feb 1-3; 2nd legs, Feb 15-17

1st rnd

Akokana or Gazelle v USM Alger (Alg); AS Kaloum (Gui) v Mangasport (Gab); Express (Uga) v Al Mehalla (Egy); Atletico Malabo or Sara de Eafilo v Al Ahli (Lby); AS Sonacos (Sen) v Wydad Casablanca (Mor); Mamahira AC (Mli) v Alliance (IvC); Les Citadins or Stade Centrafricain v Fovu de Baham (Cam); Dolphin FC (Nig) v AS Police (Con); Polisi Zanzibar or Guna SC v CS Hammam-Lif (Tun); AFC Leopards (Ken) v Al Mourada (Sud); Kaizer Chiefs (SAf, holders) v US Transfoot (Mad); US Beau Bassin-Rose Hill or Extension Gunners v Jeanne d'Arc (Reu); Asante Kotoko (Gha) v Sonangol Namibie (Ang); Maxaquene (Moz) v Santos (SAf); Zanaco (Zam) v AS Vita Club (DRC); Shabanie (Zim) v St Michel United (Sey).
1st legs, Mar 8-10; 2nd legs, Mar 22-24

2nd rnd

Gazelle or Akokana or USM Alger v AS Kaloum or Mangasport;
Express or Al Mehalla v Sara de Eafilo or Atletico Malabo or Al Ahli;
AS Sonacos or Wydad Casablanca v Mamahira AC or Alliance;
Stade Centrafricain or Les Citadins or Fovu de Baham v Dolphin FC or AS Police;
Guna SC or Polisi Zanzibar or CS Hammam-Lif v AFC Leopards or Al Mourada;
Kaizer Chiefs or US Transfoot v Extension Gunners or US Beau Bassin-Rose Hill or Jeanne d'Arc;
Asante Kotoko or Sonangol Namibie v Maxaquene or Santos;
Zanaco or AS Vita Club v Shabanie or St Michel United.
1st legs, Apr 12-14; 2nd legs, Apr 26-28

The eight winners go into the quarter-final draw, to be conducted in July

2002 CAF CUP

DRAW

1st rnd

St George (Eth) v Kampala City Council (Uga); Al Hilal (Sud) v Etoile Sahel (Tun); Kabwe Warriors (Zam) v Botswana Defence Force XI (Bot); Al Masry (Egy) v Mathare United (Ken); St Pierroise (Reu) v ASA (Mad); Mtibwa Sugar (Tan) v Ferroviario Maputo (Moz); Atahadi (Lby) v FUS Rabat (Mor); Satellite FC (IvC) v La Mancha (Con); Tonnerre Yaounde (Cam) v Deportivo Mongomo (EqG); TP Akwembe (Gab) v Utexafrica (DRC); AS Aviacao (Ang) v Rayon Sport (Rwa); Goldfields (Gha) v Satellite (Gui); Alkali Nassara (Ngr) v Maranatha de Fiokpo (Tog); NPA FC (Nig) v Djoliba (Mli); ASFA Yennega (BuF) v ASC Ndiambour (Sen).
1st legs, Mar 8-10; 2nd legs, Mar 22-24

2nd rnd

St George or Kampala City Council v Al Hilal or Etoile Sahel;
Kabwe Warriors or Botswana Defence Force XI v Al Masry or Mathare United;
St Pierroise or ASA v Mtibwa Sugar or Ferroviario Maputo;
Atahadi or FUS Rabat v Satellite FC or La Mancha;
Tonnerre Yaounde or Deportivo Mongomo v TP Akwembe or Utexafrica;
AS Aviacao or Rayon Sport v Goldfields or Satellite;
Alkali Nassara or Maranatha de Fiokpo v NPA FC or Djoliba;
ASFA Yennega or ASC Ndiambour v JS Kabylie (Alg, holders).
1st legs, Apr 12-14; 2nd leg, Apr 26-28

The eight winners go into the quarter-final draw, to be conducted in July

ASIA

CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

1st rnd, 1st legs

WEST ASIA ZONE
Sep 1: Kopetdag Ashkhabad (Tkm) 0 Nasaf Qarshi (Uzb) 1.
Oct 12: Jabla (Syr) 0 Al Kuwait (Kuw) 0.
Oct 26: Al Zawra (Irq) 3 Al Wakra (Qat) 0.
Nov 7: Al Qods (Pal) 0 Al Ahly (Yem) 0.

Al Ahli (Jor) v Al Ittihad (Sau) – Al Ahli withdrew; Al Ittihad walkover
Esteghlal (Irn) v Al Hikma (Leb) – Al Hikma withdrew; Esteghlal walkover

Byes: Al Wahda (UAE), Umed Dushanbe (Taj)

EAST ASIA ZONE
Oct 21: BEC Tero Sasana (Tha) 3 Singapore Armed Forces (Sin) 0.
Oct 24: *Kashima Antlers (Jap) 4 Persija Jakarta (Ins) 1; New Radiant (Mdv) 1 Muktijoddha Sangsad (Ban) 2; Selangor (Mly) 0 Dalian Shide (Chn) 2.
Oct 25: Happy Valley (HK) 7 Lam Pak (Mco) 0.
**Tie played over one leg only, in Kashima, because of political instability in Indonesia.*

Song Lam Nghe An (Vie) v Saunders (Sri) – Song Lam Nghe An withdrew; Saunders walkover

Byes: Anyang Cheetahs (SKo), Suwon Bluewings (SKo)

1st rnd, 2nd legs

WEST ASIA ZONE
Sep 7: Nasaf Qarshi 3 Kopetdag Ashkhabad 0 *Nasaf Qarshi 4-0 on agg.*
Nov 9: Al Ahly (Yem) 1 Al Qods 2 *Al Qods 2-1 on agg.*
Nov 14: Al Kuwait 2 Jabla 0 *Al Kuwait 2-0 on agg.*
Nov 30: Al Wakra 1 Al Zawra 4 *Al Zawra 7-1 on agg.*

EAST ASIA ZONE
Nov 7: Dalian Shide 5 Selangor 0 *Dalian 7-0 on agg*; Lam Pak 0 Happy Valley 5 *Happy Valley 12-0 on agg*; Muktijoddha Sangsad 1 New Radiant 0 *Muktijoddha 3-1 on agg.*
Nov 11: Singapore Armed Forces 1 BEC Tero Sasana 5 *BEC Tero Sasana 8-1 on agg.*

2nd rnd, 1st legs

WEST ASIA ZONE
Oct 20: Nasaf Qarshi 4 Umed Dushanbe 1.
Dec 21: Al Ittihad 3 Esteghlal 2.
Dec 25: Al Wahda 1 Al Zawra 2.

EAST ASIA ZONE
Nov 21: Anyang Cheetahs 8 Muktijoddha Sangsad 0; Happy Valley 0 Dalian Shide 2.
Nov 24: Kashima Antlers 3 BEC Tero Sasana 0; Suwon Bluewings 18 Saunders 0.

2nd rnd, 2nd legs

WEST ASIA ZONE
Oct 27: Umed Dushanbe 2 Nasaf Qarshi 3 *Nasaf Qarshi 7-3 on agg.*
Jan 4: Esteghlal 2 Al Ittihad 1 *Agg 4-4. Esteghlal on away goals.*

EAST ASIA ZONE
Nov 28: Dalian Shide 8 Happy Valley 1 *Dalian 10-1 on agg*; Muktijoddha Sangsad 0 Anyang Cheetahs 3 *Anyang Cheetahs 11-0 on agg.*

CUP-WINNERS CUP

1st rnd, 1st legs

WEST ASIA ZONE
Sep 1: Nisa Ashkhabad (Tkm) 1 Regar-Tadaz Tursun-Zade (Taj) 0.
Sep 8: SKA-PVO Bishkek (Kyr) 2 Pakhtakor Tashkent (Uzb) 1.
Oct 26: Al Saad (Qat) 1 Fajr-Sepasi Shiraz (Irn) 1; Al Sha'ab (Yem) 3 Al Wahdat (Jor) 2.
Nov 6: Al Aqsa (Pal) 1 Al-Qowa Al-Jawia (Irq) 0.
Nov 14: Teshrin (Syr) 2 Al Hilal (Sau) 3.

Al Ain (UAE) v Al Salmiya (Kuw) – Al Salmiya withdrew; Al Ain walkover

Bye: Al Shabab (Sau)

EAST ASIA ZONE
Oct 24: Victory (Mdv) 3 PSM Makassar (Ins) 0.

Pakistan representatives v Cong An (Vie) – Pakistan representatives withdrew; Cong An walkover
South China (HK) v Negombo Youth (Sri) – Negombo Youth withdrew; South China walkover

Byes: Chonbuk Hyundai (SKo), Chongqing Longxin (Chn), Home United (Sin), Royal Thai Air Force (Tha), Shimizu S-Pulse (Jap)

1st rnd, 2nd legs

WEST ASIA ZONE
Sep 14: Regar-Tadaz Tursun-Zade 4 Nisa Ashkhabad 1 *Regar-Tadaz 4-2 on agg.*
Sep 26: Pakhtakor Tashkent 3 SKA-PVO Bishkek 1 *Pakhtakor 4-3 on agg.*
Nov 9: Fajr-Sepasi Shiraz 3 Al Saad 5 *Al Saad 6-4 on agg.*
Nov 10: Al-Qowa Al-Jawia 4 Al Aqsa 3 *Agg 4-4. Al Aqsa on away goals.*
Nov 16: Al Wahdat 5 Al Sha'ab 0 *Al Wahdat 7-3 on agg.*
Nov 30: Al Hilal 1 Teshrin 1 *Al Hilal 4-3 on agg.*

EAST ASIA ZONE
Nov 10: PSM Makassar 2 Victory 1 *Victory 4-2 on agg.*

2nd rnd, 1st legs

WEST ASIA ZONE
Oct 20: Pakhtakor Tashkent 2 Regar-Tadaz Tursun-Zade 2.

EAST ASIA ZONE
Nov 21: Chongqing Longxin 8 Cong An 1; Royal Thai Air Force 1 Home United 0; South China 3 Shimizu S-Pulse 2.

2nd rnd, 2nd legs

WEST ASIA ZONE
Oct 27: Regar-Tadaz Tursun-Zade 3 Pakhtakor Tashkent 1 *Regar-Tadaz 5-3 on agg.*

EAST ASIA ZONE
Nov 28: Cong An 0 Chongqing Longxin 1 *Chongqing 9-1 on agg*; Home United 5 Royal Thai Air Force 0 *Home United 5-1 on agg.*
Nov 19: Shimizu S-Pulse 6 South China 0 *Shimizu 8-3 on agg.*

JAPAN

CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFF

1st leg - Dec 2 - Shizuoka
Jubilo Iwata 2 (Hattori pen 11, Nakayama 54)
Kashima Antlers 2 (Akita 80, Hirase 83)
HT: 1-0

2nd leg - Dec 9 - Kashima
Kashima Antlers 1 (Ogasawara 100 - golden goal)
Jubilo Iwata 0
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0
Antlers 3-2 on agg

EMPEROR'S CUP – Final

Jan 1 - National stadium, Tokyo
Shimizu S-Pulse 3 (Alex 21, Morioka 69, Baron 98 - golden goal)
Cerezo Osaka 2 (Morishima 80, Yoon pen 90)
Aet. **HT:** 1-0. **90mins:** 2-2. **Att:** 46,728.
Ref: Kamikawa

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

Robert Pires

New, improved and now indispensable for Les Bleus

ARSENAL are a club that must provoke mixed feelings for France boss Roger Lemerre. He was more than miffed when the Highbury side organised a petition against his team's friendly trip to Australia last November, but, conversely, he knows he owes Arsenal a substantial debt of gratitude for rejuvenating the career of midfielder Robert Pires.

After suffering all manner of problems at previous club Marseille – loss of form, abuse from fans, salacious tittle-tattle in the press, being stripped of the club captaincy for allegedly ignoring the instructions of coach Bernard Casoni – Pires was in dire need of a stable sporting environment and sympathetic employers.

Fortunately, he has found both at Arsenal following a £5 million move in the summer of 2000.

True, Pires needed a little time to settle in at Highbury and attune himself to the hurly-burly of the Premiership. But by the start of 2001, he had found his feet, producing a series of classic performances on the left side of midfield and cementing a place in Gunners' hearts by hitting the winner in an FA Cup semi-final against local rivals Tottenham.

However, if Pires looked sharp in the second half of last season, he has cut an even more impressive figure this term. He has been handed a new roving role, an open-ended brief that gives him greater scope to exploit his pace, invention and intelligence. A good call from Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger.

Pires is getting into the opposition box more, has considerably extended his influence in the team's build-up and is thriving on the responsibility.

The Frenchman could not be happier and is already talking of extending his five-year contract. "The confidence I had lost has come back in a big way," he says. "I'm now taking more and more initiative on the pitch, something both the players and the coach have been pushing me to do."

His renaissance at club level has also meant a shot in the arm for his international fortunes. Despite helping France capture the World Cup in 1998 and the European Championship two years later, he was not a regular starter in either tournament. Some have wondered whether he would ever confirm his massive potential and make the leap from highly talented super-sub to national team mainstay.

Yet the new and improved Pires has done just that. At last summer's Confederations Cup, he performed so well in central midfield that he was voted Player of the Tournament.

With his new-found assurance there for all to see, he has been in magnificent form in France's friendlies this past autumn, adding a previously unseen relish for tackling to his craft and celebrating his 50th cap with a fine long-range winning goal against Denmark. Whether out wide or through the middle, Pires has become indispensable for *Les Bleus*.

"Players like Patrick Vieira and Pires have developed into the backbone of our new generation," says Lemerre. "Pires has been excellent lately and has shown conclusively he has what it takes. He is shaping up to be a real star for this team."

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Arsenal (Eng)
Country France
Born January 29, 1973, in Reims
Previous clubs Stade Reims, Metz, Marseille
International debut August 1996, v Mexico
International caps 52 (10 goals)
Honours World Cup 1998; European Championship 2000; French League Cup 1996 (Metz)

Midfield orchestrator...Garcia

Pablo Garcia

Uruguayan midfielder with the chance to shine on a global stage

URUGUAY'S WORLD CUP qualification was just reward for a selection policy that put its faith in youth.

Coach Victor Pua has seen a generation through from boys to men, first finding promising youngsters and taking them through to the World Youth Cups of 1997 and 1999, then giving them senior international experience at the 1999 Copa America. – and now taking them all the way to Japan and South Korea.

The stakes were high; missing out on a third consecutive World Cup would have destroyed the remnants of Uruguay's footballing self-esteem. But Pua's youngsters were up to the challenge – and none more so than midfield general Pablo Garcia.

The 24-year-old has been with Pua from the beginning. In the Final of the 1997 World Youth Cup it was Garcia's shot, typically sweetly struck with his left foot, that gave Uruguay the lead. Argentina hit back to win, but it was clear Uruguay had unearthed a player with a long-term future.

His first senior international appearance came soon afterwards, when Uruguay took an experimental squad to the Confederations Cup. Two years later at the Copa America, the balance of the midfield looked right from the moment he came into the team. Uruguay went all the way to the Final, where they lost to Brazil – a game in which Garcia's absence through suspension was keenly felt.

The central midfielder was missing for just two of the 20 games that Uruguay went through to book their 2002 berth. Both times Uruguay were dreadful, losing at home to Paraguay and away to Venezuela. The fact that their worst two performances came in Garcia's absence leads to the conclusion that he could well be the most important player in the team.

Garcia sits in front of Uruguay's centre-backs, breaking up opponents' attacks with his height, strength and sense of anticipation, and then setting up his side's moves with his splendid left foot, both strong and subtle.

And he has the lung power to join up with his strikers and let loose his shots. His was the first goal of the successful qualifying campaign, a drive from the edge of the area that won the game against Bolivia.

Without Garcia, Uruguay are disjointed, with little to offer but their renowned *garra charrua* – effort and application. With him they are a team, their efficient defence linked to flashes of inspiration from the strikers.

Taking initiative...Pires

But Garcia's ability to knit a side together has not always gained him a regular place in European club football. There is a suspicion that he lacks pace, and after an undistinguished spell with Milan he now turns out for Venezia.

The World Cup, though, offers Garcia and the rest of Pua's prodigies a global stage to show their worth.

Tim Vickery

Fact file

Club Venezia (Ita)
Country Uruguay
Born May 11, 1977
Previous clubs Wanderers, Valladolid (Spa), Atletico Madrid (Spa), Penarol, Milan (Ita)
International debut December 1997, v United Arab Emirates
International caps 29 (1 goal)

Celso Ayala

Paraguay's defensive rock still has questions to answer

DID Paraguay peak too early? For a while they were South America's form side, capable of outplaying Argentina in Buenos Aires. Their splendid defensive unit from France 98 was still in place, and a new generation of strikers had come through to add firepower. A good World Cup run seemed assured.

Once they had qualified, however, the wheels fell off. Paraguay ended their campaign routed 4-0 by Colombia, a humiliating home defeat that cost coach Sergio Markarian his job.

"I can't understand the decision," said stalwart defender Celso Ayala when told of Markarian's sacking. "I've known him for some time, and as well as being an excellent person, I don't think we'll find a better coach.

"Despite having no infrastructure we've made it through to our second consecutive World Cup, so I don't think it was right to take a step like this."

Markarian, a feisty Uruguayan, had made some enemies in the Paraguayan FA, which was clearly looking for an excuse to get rid of him.

Another Paraguayan player to express his dismay was Ayala's long-standing centre-back partner, Carlos Gamarra. But if the pair had not performed so poorly against Colombia, then Markarian would almost certainly still have a job. Both were given a torrid time by Faustino Asprilla, previously so ineffective in the campaign.

Markarian's replacement, former Italy coach Cesare Maldini, will have to decide whether the Colombia game was just a rare off-day – or if Ayala and Gamarra have jointly reached the stage where they are beginning to become vulnerable.

Whatever the answer, there is no denying their immense contribution to Paraguayan football. "We've been together in the national team for more than eight years," says Ayala, "and we've always been close. It shows on the field. If either Gamarra or myself are missing, then Paraguay are not the same team."

His theory is proved by the 1999 Copa America, held on home soil, when Ayala's muscle tear put a rip through the side's defensive solidity. A year earlier there had been no such problems. In the World Cup the pair broke Spanish hearts and came within six minutes of taking France to a penalty shoot-out.

Ayala usually operates on the right side of central defence. "I'm quick to see the danger and get to the ball," he says, "but my particular strength is in the air. I've never specifically worked on my jumping. It's just a gift."

Although Ayala is on the small side for a centre-back, his prodigious leap makes him a dominant figure in both penalty boxes.

Paulo Cesar Carpegiani, Paraguay's coach at France 98, feels "he may be the best in the world in this aspect of the game".

> 'We've just made it to the World Cup again so I can't understand why they sacked Markarian. I don't believe we'll find a better coach'

Carpegiani has cause to recall that Ayala scored the fastest goal at the last World Cup, heading home in the first minute against Nigeria. He also leapt to contribute Paraguay's first goal in the latest qualification campaign.

But after his display against Colombia, Ayala needs to prove to new coach Maldini that he can still hit the heights.

Tim Vickery

Immense contribution...Ayala

Fact file

Club River Plate (Arg)
Country Paraguay
Born August 20, 1970
Previous clubs Olimpia, River Plate (Arg), Real Betis (Spa), Atletico Madrid (Spa), Sao Paulo (Bra)
International caps 68 (5 goals)

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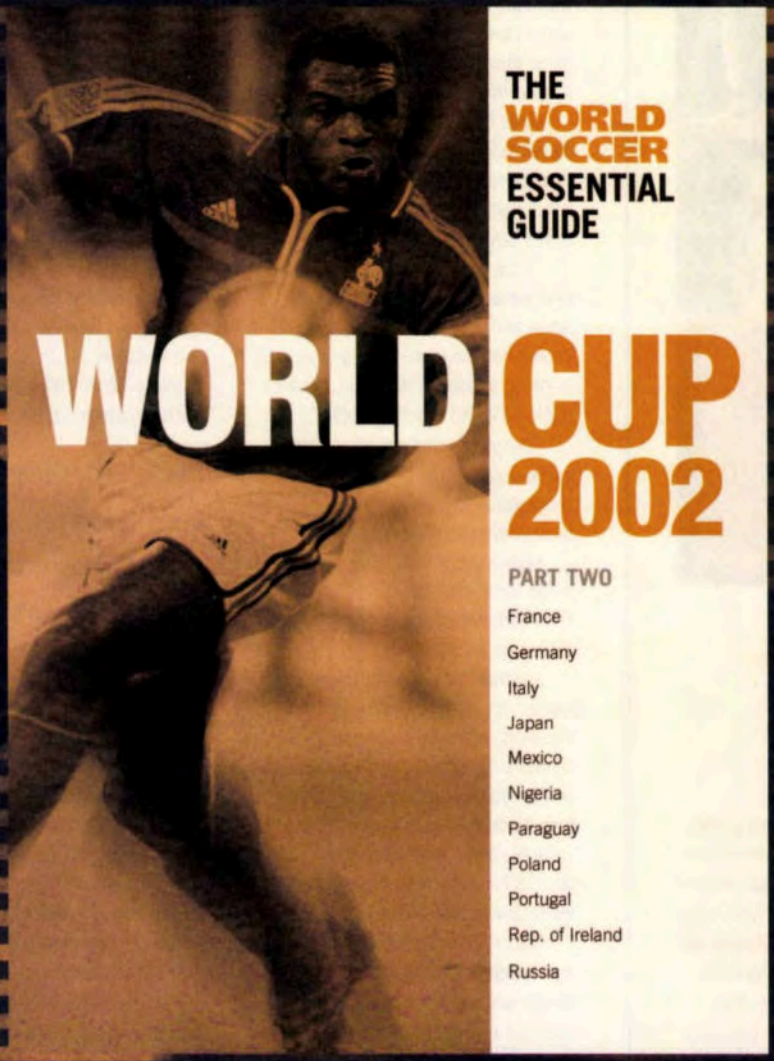

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WORLD SOCCER 34H

Short but sweet

The average tenure of a Serie A coach may not be long, but it is certainly lucrative, says Paddy Agnew

PLAYER POWER, money power, or both? Why are the life and times of the modern coach at the highest level so often short, sharp and spectacularly remunerative?

In a season that has already seen no fewer than seven Serie A coaches part company with their clubs, the question comes naturally. As I write, the fate of an eighth, Roberto Mancini at Fiorentina, hangs in the balance.

It seems the New Year will take up where the old one left off; namely, with further expensive coach dismissals. Leaving aside footballing and technical considerations, such a high turnover rate has serious financial implications.

Six of the Serie A coaches to 'part company' with their clubs this season (Dino Zoff at Lazio, Cesare Prandelli at Venezia, Renzo Ulivieri and Argentinian Daniel Passarella at Parma, Turk Fatih Terim at Milan and Englishman Roy Hodgson at Udinese) were actually sacked, thus obliging their clubs to continue honouring their not insignificant contracts.

The total cost of these 'sackings with golden handshake' was £4.8million. The managerial merry-go-round touched on the truly surreal, however, when it came to the mid-December firing of Passarella after Parma's 4-1 thrashing by Atalanta.

That dismissal came after just 42 days during which Parma lost five consecutive League games (to Juventus, Milan, Udinese, Roma and Atalanta) but during which they also qualified for an Italian Cup quarter-final clash with Udinese as well as eliminating Danish side Brondby in a UEFA Cup third-round tie. Progress in the two cup competitions, however, was not enough to save Passarella, who was sent on his way (to the bank) with no less than £1.6million for just six weeks' work.

Nice work...Daniel Passarella picked up £1.6m for just six weeks at Parma

The strange aspect of all this is that Parma are controlled by the Tanzi family, owners of Parmalat, a food products multi-national with interests in more than 30 countries, from Australia to Argentina and from China to the USA. Clearly if the Tanzis were to administer Parmalat in the same profligate way that the club have changed coach twice this season (from Ulivieri to Passarella and on to technical director Arrigo Sacchi in the grandstand), the company would have gone out of business long ago.

However, football is business with a difference. In a recent interview with *World Soccer*, Juventus coach Marcello Lippi tried to explain the high casualty rate in his profession.

Lippi said: "The problem with today's football is that the only thing that matters is winning; that is, from the point of TV rights, marketing, sponsorship etc. All the club presidents go out and spend a lot to win but only one club can actually lift a title; so the others end up running at a loss.

"Does that mean that the team which finished second or third did badly and that their coaches should be sacked? Yet, the reality of our football is that, of the first seven teams in last season's final Serie A table, only one did not change coach, namely Roma, who won the title."

Nor does Lippi believe that his observations apply only to Italian football. He argues that even his friend Sir Alex Ferguson, at Manchester United, would now fall foul of the win-immediately-at-all-costs logic.

"The fact that a lot of coaches have already been sacked in England is linked to all the money there now is in English football. What happened with Alex Ferguson, who went for years at Manchester United without winning a League title, simply could not happen now, even in English football."

Ironically, while a coach like Lippi might understandably argue for a certain fixity of tenure, experienced players acknowledge that a coaching changeover can sometimes provide a winning stimulus.

Milan's Danish international defender Thomas Helveg recently conceded to *World Soccer* that the club's surprise decision to dump Terim and replace him with Carlo Ancelotti was probably a good move. He said: "Clubs do change coach too often. Yet, sometimes, that is exactly what it takes for the team to improve. For example, the most recent change we made here at Milan, with Ancelotti coming in to take over from Terim, has worked. You can see it in training; the players are more convinced about what they're doing.

"At the end of the day, a coach says to you: 'Are you with me or not?' It needs only two or three players to say no and the coach has to quit more or less immediately because he cannot work in those conditions."

True enough, perhaps, but if the coach is wise he will not quit; rather, he will wait to get fired and that way continue collecting his salary through to the end of his contract.

One who had reason to be feeling good as the New Year opened was Fabio Capello, coach of champions Roma, who took over at the top of the table at the halfway point after beating Torino 1-0 on the opening day of 2002.

Having started the season badly, Roma have clearly done well not only to recover lost ground but also to do so by changing their tactical lineout.

Last season, Roma used an attack-oriented 3-4-1-2, but when things went wrong last September, Capello switched to a more cautious 3-5-1-1, with Marco Delvecchio or Argentinian Gabriel Batistuta the lone ranger up front, aided by an admittedly brilliant Francesco Totti.

Strengthened this season by the free-kick skills of Brazilian Assuncao (missing for much of last year), the midfield dynamism of his compatriot Lima and the experience of Christian Panucci (both new arrivals), Roma look the strongest team in Italy. So much so

Hands on...Delvecchio (left) gets stuck in during Roma's 3-0 win over Chievo

that even Batistuta's total loss of form has caused only limited suffering.

Goals in abundance throughout December from Christian Vieri took Inter to the top but Hector Cuper's side showed their limitations when outplayed (and literally outflanked) by little Chievo in a historic 2-1 defeat at the San Siro. By contrast, when Roma encountered Chievo a week later, they inflicted an emphatic 3-0 defeat on the year's revelation team, despite playing most of the second half with 10 men following the sending-off of goalkeeper Francesco Antonioli.

While Vieri remains in his current form (11 League goals at press time) both Inter and Italy are entitled to dream on. Furthermore, if Ronaldo confirms the already remarkable progress made down the recovery road, then Inter could yet challenge Roma all the way. For the time being, however, Inter look much less solid and much less convinced of their own game.

Roma's closest rivals in the title race may, in fact, turn out to be Juventus, who, after an indifferent autumn, showed signs of a renaissance with a 4-0 win over Brescia and a subsequent 3-0 win over Udinese. Significantly, three of Juve's most criticised players – goalkeeper Gigi Buffon, Dutch midfielder Edgar Davids and Czech midfielder Pavel Nedved – sparkled in both games.

One side also seemingly destined to play a part in the title contest, albeit as spoilers, are Chievo. That 3-0 pre-Christmas drubbing by Roma would have probably stopped other upstarts in their tracks. Not Chievo, who opened the New Year with arguably the most impressive result of the day, coming from behind to beat Atalanta 2-1 in Bergamo despite being without suspended midfielders Eugenio Corini and Brazilian Eriberto.

Those who have been predicting the imminent demise of the Chievo 'fairytale' may have to wait for some time for it to come true. From here to the end of the season, Chievo look certain to be a problem for everybody. Unlike the main title contenders, who are nearly all still involved in both Champions League, UEFA and Italian Cups, the Verona side do not face an exhausting fixture log-jam in the spring.

The Chievo story, like their players, seems set to run and run.

● The Libyan Arab Foreign Investment Company (Lafico) has bought a 5.31 per cent stake in Juventus for around £15 million.

Lafico is the foreign investment agency of Libya and is seen as the financial arm of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime. Between 1977 and 1986, Lafico held a stake in Fiat, the car manufacturer owned by the Agnelli family, who hold a controlling interest in Juventus. Juve floated 37 per cent of the club on the Milan stock exchange in December.

Pro-file Cristiano Doni

Atalanta playmaker who made a splash on his Italy debut

WHEN the teams took the field for the second half of Italy's friendly against Japan in Saitama in November, local fans were much dismayed by the non-reappearance of Roma captain Francesco Totti. Italy's playmaker had been replaced by the relatively unknown Cristiano Doni of Atalanta, who at 28 was making a tardy international debut.

It was bad enough that Doni had deprived the Japanese of the pleasure of watching one of the few players truly familiar to them, but things got much worse when he marked a dream debut by scoring a splendid equaliser within six minutes.

By the end of the 1-1 draw, Italy coach Giovanni Trapattoni, FIFA agents and even Japanese fans had all got the message: Doni might have arrived late but he could be here to stay.

"I really liked the way Doni played, not just because he scored the goal but also because of the way he rose to the occasion," said a satisfied Trapattoni. "Doni could prove very useful because he can also play on the left of midfield."

If the coach's words were not enough to suggest Doni is almost certain to make Italy's squad for the World Cup finals, then the player himself further helped his cause by showing consistently brilliant Serie A form with Atalanta in the two months after that international debut.

By the Christmas break, Doni was on the 11-goal mark alongside such as Christian Vieri and Andrii Shevchenko, and with only old man Dario Hubner above him in the national goalscorers' chart.

Doni was expected to be one of the most keenly-contested items on the Italian market during the traditional January transfer window. Even though Atalanta boss Ivan Ruggeri was still insisting Doni will remain in Bergamo until the end of the season, sooner or later he will be on his way, probably to either Juventus or Inter, for around £12 million.

Mobile, able to play off either foot, a good passer and a midfielder with an obvious penchant for goalscoring, Doni clearly looks a more than useful player. You wonder why it took him so long to get to the top.

Most recently, his progress suffered a temporary but potentially devastating halt when he was named in the Atalanta-Pistoiese Italian Cup match-fixing scandal 18 months ago. His alleged involvement – the player has always protested his innocence – led to a brief suspension last spring. In the longer term, though, Doni's slow climb from lower division sides such as Modena, Rimini and Pistoiese is perhaps best explained by the player.

"It took me all those years to mature, both physically and professionally," he says. "It's nobody's fault if it took me a long time to come to my best. The important thing was to get here."

Come June, again in Japan, Italy may well have good reason to be glad Doni has finally arrived.

Paddy Agnew

Fact file

Club Atalanta
Country Italy
Born April 1, 1973, in Rome
Previous clubs Modena, Rimini, Pistoiese, Bologna, Brescia
International debut November 2001, v Japan
International caps 1 (1 goal)

Holy trinity inspire Real

With Zidane, Raul and Figo in sparkling form, the champions have begun their centenary year in style – and free from debt. Jeff King reports

Madrid's main men...Zidane, Raul and Figo have propelled Real to the top of La Liga

A LOT CAN go wrong in 365 days, but nobody can deny that Real Madrid kicked off their centenary year in a state of grace. Seventy-two thousand acolytes packed the Bernabeu to watch Madrid beat Deportivo 3-1 and leapfrog the Galicians at the top of the table.

Nine capacity crowds in 10 League games is testament to the seductive powers of the holy trinity, Raul, Zidane and Figo. A seven-match run of six wins and a draw suggests the growing pains (read tactical adjustments) produced by the Frenchman's arrival are over.

It's all good news off the field, too. In December Real Madrid banked an initial £233 million as part of their training ground redevelopment. That more than wiped out the club's £185m debt, with a guaranteed £75m still to come. "Our woeful economic situation made us the laughing stock of world football," says president Florentino Perez. "Eliminating that massive debt was more important than winning the Champions League."

Not that it's a case of either or. "Real Madrid are favourites to win all three major titles," says Real Sociedad coach John Toshack of his former club. "In fact, I'd go further; it's difficult for a side that boasts Zidane, Figo and Raul not to win everything. This Madrid team reminds me of the classic Milan. Alongside Gullit, Rijkaard and Van Basten, exceptional players like Baresi, Ancelotti and Donadoni didn't seem like stars. It's the same at Madrid now. Helguera, Casillas, Roberto Carlos and Morientes seem normal, but in fact they're superstars, too."

"We've got the raw material to make history," says Fernando Hierro, never a man given to outlandish statements. "Of the 10 best players in the world, we've got four or five." In Figo and Zidane, Madrid now boast the last two FIFA World Players. The day after Figo pipped David Beckham and third-placed team-mate Raul for the FIFA award, the front cover of Spanish sports daily *Marca* boasted 'Real Madrid 2 The Rest Of The World 1'. Given Raul's second place as European Footballer of the Year behind Michael Owen, a more appropriate headline would have been Real Travesties 2 Raul 0.

Madrid's standard-bearer may not get the plaudits he deserves on the international stage, but it would be easier to unearth an apprentice wizard who hasn't seen *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* than find a Spaniard who believes Figo or Owen were more deserving winners.

"It's a mystery to me why Raul always comes so close but never wins," says his former coach Fabio Capello. Naturally, Raul's current team-mates had to tread carefully in order not to offend Figo, but this typically meant a cursory preamble about the Portuguese ace followed by a long speech about why Raul is the most decisive guy in town.

"I'm happy a Real Madrid player won the award," said Guti, "but on merit I believe Raul has done more than enough to be considered the world's No 1. But he's still young and as he maintains his astonishing level of performance every year, I'm sure his time will come."

As Guti points out, one of Raul's prime qualities is that he always comes to play, whatever the circumstances, whoever the opposition. The night after FIFA's gala in Zurich, the 24-year-old striker scored a hat-trick as Madrid came from two down to beat Second Division Nastic in the Spanish Cup. For the record, Figo was anonymous on the night.

Raul was equally decisive in the top-of-the-table clash against Deportivo. "Zidane scored a magnificent goal but I'd give Raul all the credit for Madrid's win," said Depor coach Javier Irureta. "His individual quality tips the balance and he tore us apart single-handedly for the first and third goals."

What Barcelona would give for a player as consistent as Raul. Coach Carles Rexach spent December threatening to reduce his players' holidays if they didn't get their act together. To no avail. A 2-0 defeat at Espanyol sealed a Christmas run-in of one win in seven games. Rexach's singular idea of punishment was nine days' vacation, more than any other Spanish club except Celta. Not that nine days proved sufficient for several of his charges.

Patrick Kluivert failed to make the January 2 return deadline after missing a plane in Amsterdam. Frank De Boer made it on time for training but only after a high-speed carousel through the Camp Nou car park ended with a car crash. Brazilians Fabio Rochemback and Geovanni didn't bother contacting the club before turning up two days late.

"That sends out a sad image when the club is in such a delicate position," said Barça captain Sergi. "While the rest of us are sweating to put things right, these guys are off doing their own thing. It shows a total lack of respect."

Barça keeper Roberto Bonano. describes Rexach as "a bohemian who likes to take the pressure off players and lets us enjoy ourselves on the pitch without being on top of us."

As a player, good-time 'Charly' was something of a free spirit. As Johan Cruyff's long-time assistant he was an effective, humorous foil. You might argue, however, that Barcelona's current squad need a slightly less amiable personality at the helm.

In December, Kluivert tested three times over the alcohol limit when stopped by police at six in the morning driving home from a nightclub. De Boer's lengthy absence after failing a drugs test is his most newsworthy contribution to the Barça cause in three lacklustre years at Camp Nou. Rochemback's 'if-it-moves-kick-it' philosophy extends to the training ground. Javier Saviola was spotted shopping in Andorra, 150km from Barcelona, when he was supposed to be resting before an evening Cup game.

In Rexach's defence, the chaos in the dressing-room reflects a more general malaise. In the 18 months since Joan Gaspart was elected Barcelona president it's been one long game of musical chairs behind the scenes. Llorenc Serra Ferrer started last season as first-team coach and is now technical director. Rexach was presidential assessor before being thrust into a job that involves the kind of commitment he's spent his whole life avoiding. Sports director Anton Parera began the Gaspart era as director general. He now occupies the key technical post at Camp Nou despite being little more than a trumped-up accountant.

"A club's organisation depends on the quality of the people taking the decisions," says Cruyff. "In that regard, you have to envy Real Madrid. Florentino Perez takes care of business but Jorge Valdano as sports director and his No 2, Emilio Butragueno, are in charge of all football matters. They have the experience and credibility to deal with the players. Parera, on the other hand, doesn't know what a dressing-room looks like or how footballers act and think.

"The Geovanni and Rochemback affair sums up what's wrong. But what do you expect from young players when you give your No 1 permission to turn up late [Rivaldo had an extra day's leave]? And who takes these decisions? Parera? Rexach? Gaspart? When I was coach, nobody was allowed to interfere in football matters, not even the president. I was the only boss in the dressing-room. Nobody knows who's in charge now."

Rexach insists fit-again stalwarts Rivaldo and Luis Enrique will make all the difference in the New Year. Cruyff is not convinced. "It's ridiculous pinning everything on two players," says the Dutchman, "especially after spending so much money on new recruits. What kind of planning is that?"

Barcelona have spent £110m on 11 players since Gaspart's July 2000 election. Of those, only Bonano and Patrik Andersson were habitual starters before Christmas. And both were dropped for Barça's 2002 opener, against Zaragoza. The persistent rumblings about inflated fees and misplaced commissions – especially in the cases of Saviola and Geovanni – are a side-effect of the chaos. As Cruyff observes, "Nobody at the club has clean hands."

One thing Rexach does inherit from his former boss is a penchant for frivolous tactics. The Catalan coach used 18 different starting line-ups in Barça's first 19 League games. Several players have spent much of the season playing out of position. Holland's decision to deploy Kluivert in a more withdrawn role is justified by the presence of Ruud Van Nistelrooy and Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink. Rexach's decision to play arguably the world's best all-round centre-forward in midfield while pitching the featherweight Saviola into penalty-box combat borders on the perverse.

A trip to bottom club Rayo Vallecano sandwiched between home games against Zaragoza, Sevilla and Osasuna left Rexach counting theoretical points in the bag. "At the moment we lack credibility," he admitted. "We desperately need 12 points from our next four games to boost everybody's confidence."

A 2-0 win over Zaragoza was a start, but a 30,000 crowd at the 98,000-capacity Camp Nou reflects an alarming scepticism among the masses.

Pro-file Carles Puyol

Dashing defender sweating blood for Barcelona's cause

AMID the staggering ups and downs of Barcelona's 2001-02 campaign, Carles Puyol has been a beacon of consistency. Now in his third season in Barça's first team, the 23-year-old Catalan remains a ferocious old school defender and man-to-man marker. These days, however, he is a far less impetuous player.

The straggly-haired right-back still does a good impersonation of an express train when he surges forward. But his forays into attack are now more likely to end with a decisive cross or delicate one-two than with the ball in the stand.

Born in the mountainous region of Viella on the French border, Puyol is the latest in a line of dashing full-backs from rural Catalonia. Like Albert Ferrer and Sergi before him, he arrived at Barça's youth academy as a winger, only to make his mark in defence.

Three years ago Puyol was on the point of joining Malaga. But Michael Reiziger's lacklustre form in the wake of Ferrer's departure convinced coach Louis Van Gaal to look again. The Dutchman gave Puyol his debut in December 1999, but he first attracted widespread attention when he ruined Luis Figo's autumn 2000 return to Camp Nou.

Barcelona fans have always had a weakness for players who sweat blood for the cause. Like Johan Neeskens, Migueli or Jose Mari Bakero before him, Puyol is guaranteed to bring true grit to the table. From Migueli, Barça's all-time appearance record holder, he inherits his nickname, Tarzan.

"When people talk about me as a player with balls I take it as a compliment," he says. "But I'm a noble player, I always try to win the ball and I'd never deliberately hurt an opponent."

Erstwhile hard man Jose Camacho was quick to recognise a kindred spirit. Two months after Puyol struck silver at Sydney alongside Barça team-mates Xavi and Gabri, Camacho handed the new model Tarzan his senior debut, against Holland. Manuel Pablo's long-term injury leaves Puyol in pole position to be Spain's World Cup right-back.

Before that there's the little matter of getting Barça back on course. Eight years at Camp Nou have taught Puyol an important lesson. "We spend far too much time worrying about Real Madrid," he says. "We must concentrate on our own game."

If only he could get some of his more heralded team-mates to match his commitment.

Jeff King

Fact file

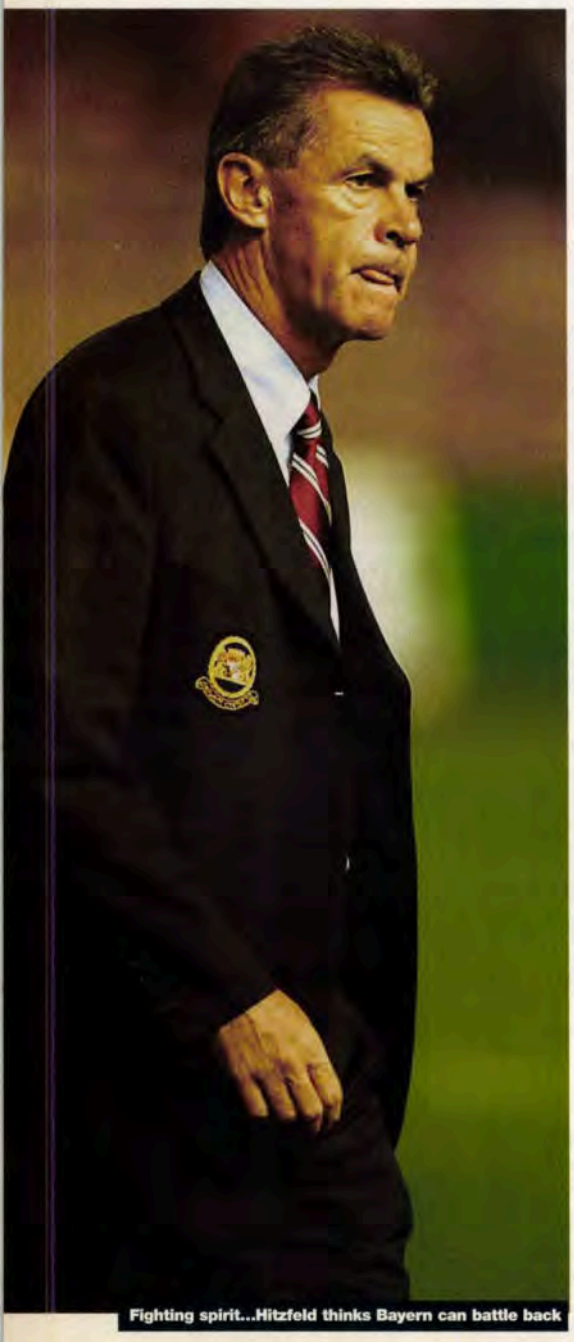
Club Barcelona
Country Spain
Born April 13, 1978, La Pobla de Segur
International debut November 2000, v Holland
International caps 5 (0 goals)
Honours Olympic silver medal 2000; European Under-21 Championship bronze medal 2000

Hitzfeld feels the heat

The Bayern coach has just experienced his worst run of results as a coach, writes Nick Bidwell

BAYERN MUNICH boss Ottmar Hitzfeld could be excused for not having felt particularly merry this Christmas. He has known nothing but success during his time as a coach, steering Borussia Dortmund and now Bayern to a clutch of European and domestic trophies. But Hitzfeld suffered his worst ever sequence of results in the run-up to the winter break, his faltering Bayern side going six games without a win and slipping to fifth place in the table.

Hitzfeld brushed aside suggestions that it was the end of an era, saying: "In a year when we have won the Bundesliga, Champions League and World Club Cup, we are said to be in crisis, and all I can do is laugh." Yet Bayern were a distinctly sorry sight as they managed only home draws with Nurnberg, Wolfsburg and Borussia Monchengladbach and lost at Werder Bremen, Hertha Berlin and Hansa Rostock.



Fighting spirit...Hitzfeld thinks Bayern can battle back

In mitigation, Bayern can point to a horrendous injury list. Key midfielders Jens Jeremies (knee), Mehmet Scholl (foot and ankle), Stefan Effenberg (foot) and Hasan Salihamidzic (knee), plus young Paraguayan attacker Roque Santa Cruz (ankle), have all spent long periods on the sidelines. At the same time, keeper Oliver Kahn, French full-backs Bixente Lizarazu and Willy Sagnol, and strikers Giovane Elber and Carsten Jancker have either had to play through the pain barrier or sit out games.

"For three and a half years we have performed at our peak," said Hitzfeld. "Now we are simply not as fresh and consequently our will to win has been undermined. All our efforts have left us weary. Take a fine pro like Bixente Lizarazu. He says he's shattered.

"In the earlier part of the season, we were scoring from relatively few chances. Now our self-belief has gone and we are creating even fewer opportunities."

Not that Hitzfeld is ready to hoist the white flag; after all, Bayern are still only five points adrift of joint Bundesliga leaders Bayer Leverkusen and Borussia Dortmund. What's more, Jeremies, Scholl and Santa Cruz are all likely to be match-fit for the season restart in late January.

"We all need to work in a more professional way," Hitzfeld declared. "The fighter in me is coming out now. The minimum goal is a top-three finish. But I want the title."

On the transfer front, Bayern have enjoyed mixed fortunes of late, beating Real Madrid to the signature of Leverkusen midfield star Michael Ballack, but losing out to Dortmund in the tug-of-war for young Freiburg sweeper or midfielder Sebastian Kehl.

Figures vary as to how much Ballack cost Bayern; Leverkusen say £9million, while Bayern talk of £3m. Whatever the truth, it has to be money well spent. Ballack, an astute creator and a clever finisher, was rightly rated the best player in the Bundesliga this season by national coach Rudi Voller. He will surely form an explosive midfield partnership at Bayern next season with another high-profile acquisition, Sebastian Deisler of Hertha Berlin.

As for the messy Kehl saga, Bayern general manager Uli Hoeness is likely to have nightmares about it for quite some time. After talks with the Freiburg youngster last summer, Hoeness thought he had persuaded him to come on board in 2002 or 2003 and handed him a £500,000 down payment to seal the transfer. However, fearing that such sweeteners be declared illegal, Kehl later returned the money and backtracked on a move to Bayern.

Never reticent about stealing a march on their arch-rivals, Dortmund then smartly stepped in to wrap up a deal with Kehl, leaving Hoeness to rant and threaten legal action.

"I believe I have better prospects for my development at Dortmund," said Kehl. Those of a more cynical nature think Bayern's refusal to guarantee him a first-team place was a more relevant factor.

Certainly, Dortmund will resume the championship race in high spirits. No other team has a better away record this season (seven wins on their travels), their new Brazilian midfielder Ewerthon has been in great form – scoring six and making three – and, thanks to an eight-match unbeaten run, the 'Yellow and Blacks' went into the winter break in second place, behind Leverkusen only on goal difference.

Even so, hard-to-please Dortmund coach Matthias Sammer remains as parsimonious in his praise of his men as ever. "We are not as good as many thought we were at the beginning of the season," said the former international, who has just had his contract extended to 2006. "But to our credit we came back stronger after being eliminated from the Champions League."

Meanwhile, at Leverkusen, 'autumn champions' for the first time in their history, a drop off in form in the pre-Christmas period put a dampener on a hitherto excellent season. With the ever-adventurous Brazilian centre-back Lucio, German international midfielders Bernd Schneider and Michael Ballack, and prolific front-runners Oliver Neuville and Ulf Kirsten in rampant form, Leverkusen appeared an unstoppable force. Indeed, they remained unbeaten until December, when they lost in quick succession to Werder Bremen, Hertha Berlin and Wolfsburg.

For coach Klaus Toppmoller, the reasons for the slump were simple – the absence through injury of Ballack, Schneider, Lucio and skipper Jens Nowotny. "We simply lack the quality in depth and can't make up when these key players aren't there," he said.

The surprise packets of 2001-02? Stuttgart would have to be contenders, since, after struggling against relegation last season, they are shaping up extremely well. Coach Felix Magath has done great work, especially in nurturing the talent of promising kids such as keeper Timo Hildebrand, defenders Andreas Hinkel and Timo Wenzel, midfielder Aliaksandr Hleb and forward Christian Tiffert.

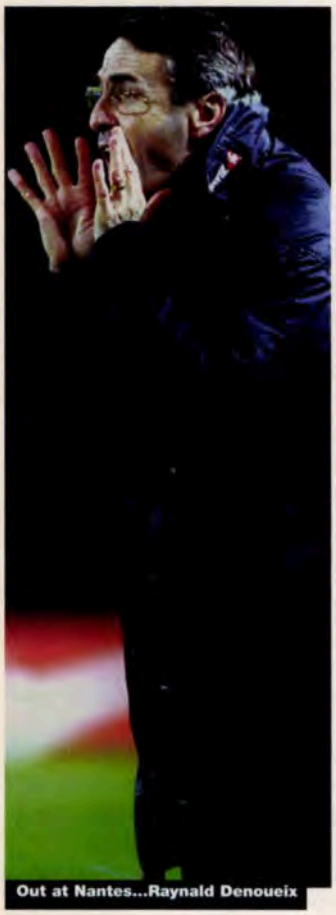
Werder Bremen, too, have improved out of all recognition. They were just above the drop zone in September, but with midfield battler Thorsten Frings and left-sided schemer or attacker Marco Bode leading the charge, they embarked on a run of 10 wins in 12 games, moving into third spot at the winter break.

The reward for Werder coach Thomas Schaaf was a hefty salary increase – from £250,000 to £320,000 – and even this most inexpressive of characters must have raised a smile at that.

The newest Bundesliga coach is Armin Veh, brought in to replace the sacked Friedhelm Funkel at Hansa Rostock. The 40-year-old, previously at Second Division Reutlingen, faces a tough challenge, with his new side just five points above the relegation zone.

FRANCE

Lemerre sounds note of caution



Out at Nantes...Raynald Denoueix

NATIONAL coach Roger Lemerre has admitted that he would rather have avoided being grouped with a South American team when giving his reaction to the World Cup finals draw.

This pitted *Les Bleus* with Uruguay, as well as Denmark and Senegal, and though they finished only fifth in the South American qualifying table, they are perceived as tough opposition.

Uruguay will be particularly dangerous now that Alvaro Recoba is back in action for Internazionale after having his suspension reduced for carrying a faked passport.

Denmark are arguably the second strongest team in the group and they improved hugely last year. Their biggest threat is Ebbe Sand, flourishing in the Bundesliga at Schalke.

Senegal, many of whose squad play in France, look less dangerous, though Lemerre says it will be a pleasure to meet them, as they come from a French-speaking African nation with a French coach in Bruno Metsu.

The Senegal game, the tournament's opener, will be especially poignant for Patrick Vieira, who was born in that country. Vieira, recently named French Footballer of the Year by *France Football*, has said he doesn't know quite what to think about the match against Senegal. "I think that the people there will be mad; that they'll be more happy than anything else."

Thierry Henry came second in the *France Football* vote, followed by Zinedine Zidane.

Lille coach Vahid Halilhodzic, named coach of the year, was seriously injured in a skiing accident over Christmas and was set to be out of commission for several weeks. The Bosnian perforated a lung and broke four ribs while at Val d'Isere.

Raynald Denoueix, Halilhodzic's counterpart at champions Nantes, has finally lost his job following the team's terrible start to the domestic League season. Denoueix had been in charge since summer 1997 and led the Canaries to their first League title for six years last season. However, his team have been in the relegation zone throughout the current term.

The new man in charge is former Nantes player and Argentinian international Angel Marcos, who was brought in from fellow strugglers Lorient. The 58-year-old's previous coaching posts have included Niort, United Arab Emirates side Al Ain and Ismaili of Egypt.

Yvon Pouliquen, 39, has taken the helm at Lorient, having been on the coaching staff at Strasbourg since 1996.

Nicolas Anelka's loan move to Liverpool from Paris Saint-Germain was the most eyecatching deal in the transfer market over the past month.

The Anfield club have an option to purchase the international forward at the end of the season.

Andre Duclos

Pro-file Ulrich Rame

Cool head poised to understudy Barthez in Korea/Japan

FRANCE coach Roger Lemerre must be relieved that his number two keeper, Ulrich Rame of Bordeaux, has been in such good form this season. With France's first choice, Fabien Barthez, coming under fire in the autumn for a string of gaffes at Manchester United, Lemerre may need a foolproof Plan B in Korea/Japan; 29-year-old Rame is just that.

Rame has agility, good positional sense, mastery of one-on-one situations and proficiency on the ball. But he scores highest when it comes to his mental attitude. Rame always appears calm, and lapses of concentration are rare.

But despite Barthez's wobbles, the Bordeaux keeper insists he is not contemplating top billing at the World Cup. "Fabien Barthez is France's first choice," says Rame. "He has had problems at Manchester United, but he hasn't had any for France. My aim is to be his understudy in South Korea and Japan."

His career has been anything but an easy ride and it has required much determination and a pinch of good fortune to reach the top. At his first club, Angers, he endured a three-cornered battle for the first-team jersey with Jean-Marie Aubry and Nicolas Sachy before establishing himself. Then, when he left for Bordeaux in summer 1997, he was initially cast as the back-up to Stanley Menzo.

However, Menzo's form at the start of that 1997-98 season was wretched, and Rame performed so well after replacing him that he was in for keeps. He went on to star in Bordeaux's League triumph the next season and won his first full cap against Andorra in June 1999.

However, Bordeaux's lack of trophies in recent seasons has left Rame disenchanted, and he makes no secret of his desire for a change of scenery. "We have not improved in the past three years. We are always fourth or fifth in the French championship and never go further than the last 16 in the UEFA Cup," complains the keeper, who has been linked with Arsenal, Manchester United and Monaco in recent years. "It seems to satisfy everyone, but not me.

"I have a contract with Bordeaux until 2006 and have been happy to stay up to now. But what matters to me is sporting success. We'll have to see."

As a former keeper, Bordeaux coach Elie Baup knows only too well what a difference an outstanding number one makes. He also knows he will have to look for a new one soon.

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Bordeaux
Country France
Born September 19, 1972, in Nantes
Previous club Angers
International debut June 1999, v Andorra
International caps 9
Honours Confederations Cup 2001; French League 1999

Leeds still on trial

The League leaders continue to attract attention for all the wrong reasons, says Gavin Hamilton

Faces of hatred...Cardiff fans invade the pitch to taunt Leeds as police try to keep them at bay

ENGLISH football should have been on a high going into 2002. With Liverpool sweeping the board in the *World Soccer* awards, and Michael Owen the first Englishman to be voted European Footballer of the Year for almost a quarter of a century, respect for the English game has rarely been higher.

Yet 2002 began as 2001 had ended – with a number of unsavoury incidents that threatened to tarnish the reputation of the English game.

In the first week of January, Chelsea's John Terry and Jody Morris were both charged with causing actual bodily harm and fined two weeks' wages after an incident at a nightclub. Meanwhile, as many had predicted, there was crowd trouble at the FA Cup third round game between Cardiff City and Leeds.

Not that Leeds were responsible for the trouble in Cardiff, which followed their 2-1 defeat, the biggest upset of the Cup weekend. Far from it. On the final whistle, minutes after Second Division Cardiff had grabbed a late winner, home fans spilled on to the pitch in scenes reminiscent of a bygone era. Many tried to attack Leeds players as they rushed for the safety of the dressing-room.

The Football Association came under heavy pressure to punish Cardiff for the chaotic scenes, but several issues need to be addressed.

Why did the police and stewards not intervene during the match to arrest Cardiff fans who hurled coins and other missiles at Leeds supporters, players and the referee, Andy D'Urso?

Did Cardiff owner Sam Hammam, the man behind Wimbledon's Crazy Gang days, inflame feelings by walking along the touchline, past the Leeds supporters, towards the end of the game?

And why did the authorities not challenge Sky Sports over the televising of such a potentially troublesome fixture so late in the day (a 4pm kick-off), allowing both sets of fans to indulge in a lengthy pre-match drinking session?

The truth is that crowd trouble within grounds is now so well contained that when it does occur, the fuss created is so much greater.

Yet Leeds never seem to be far from the action. Manager David O'Leary's prickly personality got the better of him after the match, when he became embroiled in an altercation with Hammam and had to be pulled away by his chairman, Peter Ridsdale.

O'Leary has spent much of the past month on the back foot, defending the timing and title of his recently published book, *Leeds United On Trial*. The book is O'Leary's ghosted account of his time as Leeds manager, though he claims he was not responsible for the timing of the tabloid newspaper serialisation, just days after the end of the trial of his players Lee Bowyer and Jonathan Woodgate.

Bowyer was acquitted of assaulting Asian student Sarfraz Najeib following a drunken night out. Woodgate was found guilty on the lesser charge of affray and sentenced to do community service. But both players were fined four weeks' wages for breaking club rules on drinking.

Najeib has announced his intention to take civil action against both players and Leeds – and the whole affair has left a nasty feeling in the air at Elland Road. The publication of O'Leary's book and the offer of new, improved contracts to Woodgate and Bowyer has only compounded matters.

Any suggestion, however, that the affair would affect Leeds' title ambitions were swept away by their form since the court case. They began 2002 as leaders of the Premiership, with Robbie Fowler already demonstrating his considerable worth.

The arrival of Fowler, who has brought a previously unseen subtlety to the Leeds attack, could prove the catalyst. He has six goals in as many games since his transfer from Liverpool, who must be wondering whether they should have sold him.

What a difference a month makes. In November, Liverpool were top of the Premiership and Leeds were nervously awaiting the verdicts in the Woodgate-Bowyer case. Meanwhile, Manchester United's defensive wobbles were threatening to turn into a full-blown crisis, and Arsenal were unsettled by Arsene Wenger's failure to sign a new contract.

By the start of January, United had won six League games in a row and roared back into second place, while Liverpool, having signed Nicolas Anelka on loan, took just six points from their six games. They slipped to fifth, behind Arsenal, who finally persuaded Wenger to sign a new deal, and surprise challengers Newcastle.

"The team that finishes above Manchester United will win the title," Bobby Robson said after his Newcastle side were swept aside at Old Trafford. That win for the champions followed victories over Derby, Middlesbrough, Southampton, Everton and Fulham, with Ruud Van Nistelrooy enjoying a hot scoring streak.

The United revival has coincided with the 'resting' of David Beckham on the substitutes' bench and the return to form of Ryan Giggs. Keeper Fabien Barthez, whose blunders cost United dear in November, has scaled back the more adventurous side of his game, while veteran French defender Laurent Blanc seems more attuned to the rigours of the English game.

Sir Alex Ferguson plans further changes following the sale of Andy Cole to Blackburn for £7million and the transfer-listing of Dwight Yorke. He is pursuing interest in West Ham's volatile Italian, Paolo Di Canio, and Diego Forlan of Argentina's Independiente.

However, United can afford few slip-ups between now and the summer if they are to retain their title. Ferguson's men have already been beaten six times in the League. Blackburn, who lost seven games during their 1994-5 title-winning season, are the only champions of the past 15 years to have lost more.

Liverpool have slipped from contention in the past month after a number of disappointing results, not least a 2-1 defeat at Anfield by Arsenal, who played more than half the game with 10 men after the controversial sending-off of Giovanni Van Bronckhorst. He became the 40th player to be dismissed during Wenger's five and a half years at

Highbury. The Dutchman was shown a second yellow card after being adjudged to have dived in the penalty area. The decision was seen as harsh by many, and helped to spark a debate on the introduction of video evidence which is set to run and run.

Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier, currently convalescing in Corsica, is still a fair way away from returning to lead the side on a day-to-day basis. Yet he was behind the signing of Anelka from Paris Saint-Germain on loan for the rest of the season.

Houllier defended the 'no win, no fee' signing of Anelka, saying: "I know what has been said about him but I couldn't care less. His signing is not a major gamble; I think it's more a case of a fantastic coup. A player like him doesn't lose his ability and his special talents overnight. I believe in him."

However, the move has attracted more than its fair share of critics. Wenger was just one who doubted whether Anelka could play in the same team as Owen, *World Soccer's* player of the year. Then there is the additional factor of Anelka's temperament, which proved such a disruptive element in the dressing-rooms at Arsenal and Real Madrid.

Anelka's signing could prove to be inspirational, particularly if Liverpool progress in the Champions League and Houllier can harness the pace of Owen and Anelka against teams who place more emphasis

Mr Goals...United's Van Nistelrooy is on a hot streak

on attack than defence, such as Manchester United and Real Madrid. However, the early signs are that the transfer could have coincided with the derailment of Liverpool's title ambitions.

Arsenal, who have been given the go-ahead by Islington Council to build a new 80,000-seater stadium on a site half a mile from Highbury, followed the gutsy win at Anfield with home victories over Chelsea and Middlesbrough to go into 2002 on a high.

SCOTLAND

McLeish in as Murray builds for future

ALTHOUGH Rangers have not officially surrendered the League title to Celtic, the mid-season restructuring of the club's management hierarchy suggests that chairman David Murray is now taking the longer view of how to re-establish his club as the dominant force in Scotland.

Alex McLeish, acknowledged as one of the rising stars of Scottish football management, has been brought in from Hibernian as first-team coach, while his predecessor, Dutchman Dick Advocaat, has been handed the director of football role at Ibrox.

McLeish's appointment was not met with universal approval by Rangers fans, who, after becoming increasingly frustrated at their team's inability to challenge the 'Auld Enemy', were clearly looking for a big-name manager to restore the club's fortunes.

The supporters appeared to believe that McLeish, the former Aberdeen and Scotland defender, had not achieved enough during his fledgling managerial career with Motherwell and Hibernian to merit his new-found status.

Nevertheless, after a disappointing start with draws against Hibs and Motherwell, McLeish's reputation was enhanced with back-to-back victories over Dundee United, Hibs and St Johnstone.

These wins failed to dent Celtic's lead – 13 points after the New Year games – although one or two chinks have appeared in the Parkhead side's armoury.

Manager Martin O'Neill has been advised by his board that no further cash will be available for the time being for forays into the transfer market. O'Neill's disappointment was undisguised, with the manager indicating that he felt an unnecessary hurdle had been placed in his path.

Shortly afterwards, Celtic's long unbeaten League run was ended at Pittodrie as Aberdeen, 2-0 winners, produced their best performance for years.

Hibs, meanwhile, reacted swiftly to the loss of McLeish by appointing former France midfielder Franck Sauzee as manager. Sauzee has been a player at Easter Road since 1999.

Alan Fairley

There were three red cards in that match, though the most remarkable sending-off was that of Cwmbran's Michael Pattimore, a half-time substitute against Barry Town, who was given his marching orders for deliberate handball after being on the pitch for only 55 seconds.

Total Network Solutions consolidated their position at the top of the table with a 5-1 win at struggling Oswestry Town.

Mel Thomas

Nice to see you...Rangers' new boss, Alex McLeish, salutes the fans

WALES

Nomads defence goes walkabout

THE Christmas period threw up a number of strange results, none more so than title challengers Connah's Quay Nomads' 6-0 home trouncing by lowly Llanelli.

The visitors, under new manager Jason Jones, capitalised on some woeful defending, with Mark Dickeson hitting a hat-trick. Nomads recovered by beating Rhyl 4-0 on Boxing Day.

Bangor City stayed in touch at the top by drawing with Caernarfon. Two goals from Marc Lloyd-Williams took his tally to 20 in 15 games.

N IRELAND

Coyle seeks commitment

GLENTORAN manager Roy Coyle has demanded more commitment from his players after the leaders' title challenge faltered.

The Glens have dropped a number of points in recent weeks, allowing Portadown and Coleraine to close the gap.

But the players responded in the derby against champions Linfield, coming back from 2-0 down to force a 3-3 draw.

Linfield suffered a major blow when striker David Larmour was ruled out for the rest of the season with a knee injury.

Roy Kitson

Stripper claims rock beleaguered Dutch

Klaas-Jan Droppert on a bad end to a terrible year for the national team

HOLLAND

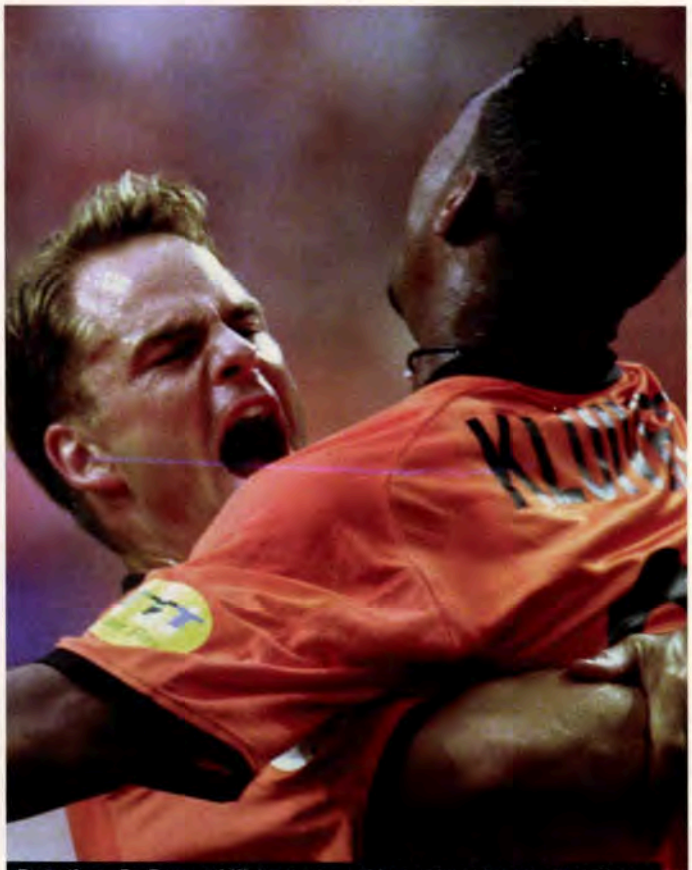
THE national team's woes of recent months were exacerbated when a Danish newspaper claimed leading Dutch players were involved in an 'erotic party' on the night before the friendly against Denmark on November 10.

The *Berlingske Tidende*, quoting stripper Kira Eggers, claimed Patrick Kluivert, Edgar Davids and Frank De Boer all attended the party at a Copenhagen hotel.

Later, however, Eggers stated that she had only had a few drinks with some of the players. Meanwhile, De Boer said he was planning legal action, while Kluivert described the story as a complete fabrication.

The newspaper report came in the wake of Holland's failure to qualify for the World Cup, the resignation of coach Louis Van Gaal and the positive tests for nandrolone by three players.

There has also been trouble on the domestic front, with Feyenoord accusing Roda JC and NEC Nijmegen of withholding information about the fitness of two full-backs being bought by the Rotterdam club. Ramon Van Haaren (Roda) and Pieter Collen (NEC) moved to Feyenoord last summer but both have missed much of the season because of injuries. Club chairman Jorien Van den Herik has threatened to take legal action over the issue.



Party time...De Boer and Kluivert were subjects of a stripper's allegations

In the Dutch Cup, Ajax and their reserves both reached the quarter-finals, and have a good chance of making the last four. Ajax II, 2-1 victors over Twente, face Second Division Stormvogels/Telstar, while Ajax, 4-3 winners over RBC, meet Groningen. The other ties are Utrecht v Heerenveen and PSV v Feyenoord.

Edward Sturing, assistant to Ronald Koeman at Vitesse, has taken the reins following his predecessor's appointment by Ajax. Bottom club Fortuna Sittard have sacked Hans Verel.

Anderlecht match-winner...Dindane

BELGIUM

Five vie for biggest prize

IN THE most open championship race for years, the top five teams went into the winter break separated by just two points. Club Brugge and Anderlecht were joined by less fashionable clubs Genk and Gent, and the quintet was completed by Standard Liege, whose 2-1 win at Westerlo in the final game before Christmas put them joint top with Brugge.

"This is the kind of pressure we enjoy," said Standard coach Michel Preud'homme, whose side beat Brugge away and Anderlecht at home earlier in the season.

The day before the Westerlo-Standard game, an Aruna Dindane goal had given Anderlecht a 1-0 victory at home to Brugge, allowing the champions to move ominously to within two points of the leaders.

Second Division pacesetters Mechelen surprisingly sacked Dutch coach Barry Hulshoff after losing their first game of the season, 3-1 at home to third-placed Mons.

Admittedly, Mechelen had drawn their five previous games, results that ate into what had been a 13-point lead, but to lose one game was hardly a sacking offence. However, it was apparent that Hulshoff's relationship with his players had deteriorated. His replacement is former Mechelen coach and player Fi Vanhoof.

Nicholas Harling

SWITZERLAND

Basle resurrected by Christians

BASLE rallied strongly after a disastrous start to the season to deservedly top the table after the 22-round qualifying phase.

Having opened the campaign with an 8-1 loss at Sion, Christian Gross's side steadily got their game together and never looked back after taking pole position after the 15th round.

Basle now enter the championship play-offs with the next best seven sides – Lugano, Grasshopper, St Gallen, Servette, Sion, Young Boys and Zurich. The remaining four teams – Aarau, Neuchatel Xamax, Lausanne and Lucerne – are forced to play in the relegation/promotion pool.

The purchase of Argentinian striker Christian Gimenez (see profile, right) from Lugano last summer has proved key to Basle's success. Meanwhile, Gross, whose job was on the line after failing to win a UEFA Cup place last season, has been rewarded with a contract extension until 2004.

Grasshopper coach Hans-Peter Zaugg has paid the penalty for failing to gain a Champions League group place and disappointing domestic results. His contract will not be renewed at the end of the season, with St Gallen's Marcel Koller already signed up to replace him.

Lucerne, with debts of around £2.2 million, have applied for bankruptcy protection and were told to provide financial guarantees of £860,000 to cover players' and officials' salaries until the season's end. Failure to do so will result in banishment to the fifth minor league, the lowest in Switzerland.

Another indebted club, Sion, have sold striker Julien Poueys to Sedan. The Frenchman went into the history books when he and Samuel Ojong each scored a hat-trick for Sion in the same match, a first for Swiss football,

in that 8-1 rout of Basle. Sion's Yugoslav defender Dusko Djurisic has also moved to Sedan, where former Sion coach Henri Stambouli is now in charge.

Ivar von Rulach

PORTUGAL

Emotional Toni bites bullet at Benfica

SPORTING LISBON, powered by the goals of Mario Jardel (19 in the first 16 matches), went into the New Year as League leaders, while city rivals Benfica were losing yet another coach.

Sporting consolidated their position with a 1-0 home win over Vitoria Setubal three days before Christmas, although, the next day, closest challengers Boavista kept Sporting's lead to just one point after winning 1-0 at home to Benfica.

The Lisbon Eagles' defeat proved the final straw for coach Toni, who

Goal message...Jardel

announced his resignation at an emotional press conference after just over a year in charge. Jesualdo Ferreira, previously assistant coach, has taken charge until the end of the season.

The defeat by Boavista came after Benfica could only draw at home to bitter rivals Sporting and an early Cup exit at the hands of Maritimo.

Toni's departure came against a background of continuing political wrangling at the club and supporters' disgruntlement at the ongoing demolition of the Stadium of Light and perceived poor refereeing standards. The latter issue prompted hundreds of fans to block a major road near Benfica's ground in protest.

There were a number of other coaching changes during December. Former Benfica assistant Jorge Castelo took the reins at Sporting Farense after the dismissal of Spaniard Alberto Pazos. Castelo, who arrived from Second Division Felgueiras, faces an uphill struggle in pulling Farense clear of the relegation zone.

Bottom side Varzim are also under new management, with Jorge Alberto Costa coming in for Rogerio Goncalves.

Vitor Oliveira has returned to coach struggling Gil Vicente until the end of the season after the dismissal of Luis Campos. Oliveira won promotion to the top flight during his previous spell in charge, 13 years ago.

Alberto da Silva

REP OF IRELAND

Mahon pays price as Bohs struggle

BOHEMIANS, last season's Double winners, parted company with manager Pete Mahon in December with the team struggling to find their form.

Mahon, assistant to Roddy Collins last season, had a terrible few months in charge at Dalymount Park, and he left with Bohs grounded in mid-table, only a few points above the drop zone.

His successor is Stephen Kenny, who has been making a name for himself at Longford Town. At 30, he is the youngest manager in the League.

The Republic of Ireland's qualification for the World Cup finals has meant that the start of the Eircom League's transition season will now start a month later than planned, running from July 9 until January 2003.

The Republic will play Nigeria for the first time at Lansdowne Road on May 17, the day before they leave for the World Cup.

The rest of the warm-up programme is taking shape, with games against Russia in Dublin on February 13, Denmark in Dublin on March 27, and probably the United States on April 17.

Sean Creedon

Pro-file Christian Gimenez

Argentinian striker giving his all for Basle

THESE are good times for fans of Swiss club Basle. They have a new stadium, the St Jakob Park, their team recently won the national 'winter championship' and they have an exciting new hero in Argentinian striker Christian Gimenez.

Of course, there have been other factors behind Basle's successful season. Ex-Tottenham boss Christian Gross has kept a firm hand on the tiller, while skipper and central defensive organiser Murat Yakin and Australian midfielder Scott Chipperfield have both excelled.

But Gimenez has made the biggest contribution to putting Basle in the running for their first League title for 21 years. Quick of movement and thought, aggressive and yet always calm, he has proved the perfect spearhead, racking up 21 goals in 22 games.

The 27-year-old began the season with Lugano, his club since 1997. But Basle's 8-1 thumping at Sion on the opening day was to change all that. In the wake of the humiliation, Basle president Rene C Jaggi concluded that his team needed a new charismatic and talented attacker. Gimenez, who scored 21 goals the previous season, became his target – and he fought off opposition from German side Wolfsburg and Austria Wien to land his man in a £1.5 million deal.

"Basle were much more enthusiastic about signing me than anyone else," said Gimenez. "I had a good feeling about them from the start. They are incredibly ambitious, and it was a good move both for football and economic reasons. I remembered scoring the first goal at the St Jakob Park [for Lugano in a 4-1 defeat by Basle last spring] and it really is a wonderful arena."

After beginning his career with San Miguel, Gimenez got his dream move in 1995 when joining Boca Juniors. However, there were to be few first-team opportunities, with the likes of Claudio Caniggia, Sebastian Rambert, Diego Latorre and one Diego Maradona ahead of him in the pecking order. As a consequence, he readily accepted an offer from Lugano.

Gimenez quickly adapted to European football and began to show his goalscoring potential, though his progress was interrupted in 1998 by a knee ligament operation which sidelined him for nine months. He returned to action even hungrier for goals, becoming the darling of the fans of Lugano and Basle.

"I play with the heart," says Gimenez. "I want to identify fully with every club I play for. I give everything."

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Basle (Swi)
Country Argentina
Born November 13, 1974, in Buenos Aires
Previous clubs San Miguel, Boca Juniors, Lugano (Swi)

Lyngby flop after amateur dramatics

Jim Holden on how one club's bankruptcy has brought the domestic game into disrepute

DENMARK

THE Danish Superliga was reduced to farce on the final day of the autumn half of the season. Lyngby, officially declared bankrupt a few days earlier, lost 7-0 to AGF Aarhus fielding a team of amateurs from their ninth division junior side.

Strict rules prevented the club resigning from the top division, and plans to allow a number of veterans such as former internationals Michael Laudrup and Klaus Berggreen to play in the team to maintain a modicum of standards were also vetoed.

Laudrup has called the whole affair "a disgrace to Danish football" – and he is not far from the truth.

If Lyngby are forced to turn out for the rest of the season with players unqualified for the job, it will reflect badly on the domestic game. Yet, at the time of writing, that still appeared to be the reality.

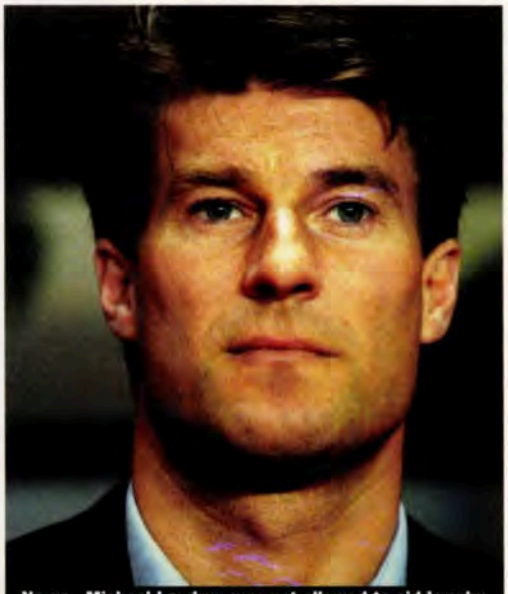
The stricken club, who had already seen 13 players depart, pleaded with the authorities to allow them to withdraw gracefully from the League rather than suffer inevitable heavy defeats in every round of action.

Lyngby chairman Mikkel Sorensen said: "If we are forced to play the spring season in the Superliga in order to save the club's future, we will, of course, do it. We hope, however, that we will be able to talk to the FA about the matter so that we can end this in a decent way."

Under the rules, Lyngby will be automatically relegated to the Fourth Division for going bankrupt – but only if they fulfil their remaining fixtures this season.

The exodus of players was swift. Morten Petersen went to Scottish club Livingston, talented teenager Jan Frederiksen joined Feyenoord, while Norwegian midfielder Lars Bohinen was one of six to make the short trip to close suburban rivals Farum, the most ambitious of Denmark's new clubs.

Farum chairman Peter Brixtofte is a realist rather than a romantic, however, and believes Danish soccer can sustain only half a dozen fully professional clubs. "There are simply too many unrealistic leaders in Danish football," he insisted. "They all want to be at the top of the League, but the truth is there is only room for six clubs now."


No go...Michael Laudrup was not allowed to aid Lyngby

Current League leaders Brondby and big-spenders FC Copenhagen are obviously two of those; two more must be in Jutland; and one in Odense, the main city of the island of Fyn. That leaves one more club in Copenhagen – with eight or nine hopefuls in the frame, from Farum to Frem to AB to Hvidovre, the club owned by Peter Schmeichel.

It certainly won't be Lyngby, who overstretched themselves and paid the highest price. Aarhus didn't celebrate their 7-0 victory – not least because they had been saved from bankruptcy themselves only a few months earlier by a rich new owner, who took pity on their plight.

NORWAY

Start struggle to stop the rot

A NUMBER of top division clubs have found themselves in financial straits this winter, with the drop in revenue from the sale of players to foreign sides a major contributory factor.

The FA was forced to put back its deadline for receiving documents from clubs assuring their financial stability, which are necessary before they can be sent professional licences for the following season.

Start, newly promoted from the Second Division, have had dire problems. Tommy Bergersen and Stian Ohr were just two of the squad to leave after the board announced that players were free to seek transfers, as wages had to be cut.

Bergersen, who had only just joined from Bodo/Glimt, decided that enough was enough and quit for Swedish side Sundsvall.

"I cannot accept a cut in wages in addition to the fact that several players have already left the club," he said. "The motivation to play for Start is simply not there any more. The total package that Sundsvall offered me was too good to refuse."

Ohr has moved to Valerenga, the other club to win promotion last season. A quick winger, he has developed into a dazzling player after his arrival from Molde.

Start have managed to avoid bankruptcy, but only thanks to support from local businessmen as well as their own cost-cutting measures.

English coach Stuart Baxter has left Lyn Oslo after only half a season in charge, having been offered the chance of a role in England's youth coaching set-up.

However, the club have compensated for the loss by considerably strengthening their squad. Defenders Thomas Lagerlof (AIK Stockholm), Steven Lustu (AB), Tommy Berntsen (Eintracht Frankfurt) and Johnny Hansen (Tromso) have all been brought in.

Lillestrom have signed Liverpool central defender Frode Kippe from next July, though Kippe is hoping to return to Norway even sooner after failing to establish himself in the Anfield first team.

Sigurd Odegaard

SWEDEN

Djurgardens scoop Kallstrom

STOCKHOLM side Djurgardens made probably the biggest coup in the close-season transfer market by signing midfielder Kim Kallstrom from relegated Hacken.

Kallstrom, 19, is one of Sweden's most promising players and now probably the League's biggest attraction following the sales of Zlatan Ibrahimovic to Ajax and Anders Svensson to Southampton. IFK Gothenburg and Feyenoord were both in the chase for his signature.

"Stockholm's football is booming right now, and I find the move a very attractive proposition," Kallstrom said. "Of course, I intend to play abroad in

Star attraction...Kim Kallstrom

the future, but before that I want to do my best for Djurgardens."

Few expect Kallstrom to see out his five-year contract in Stockholm; Hacken, for one, will be keen for him to leave, since they are set to receive more than £1million when he is sold again.

Djurgardens, League runners-up last season, received another boost to their championship hopes when veteran midfielder Stefan Rehn decided to continue playing for yet another season.

Champions Hammarby failed to lure top Norwegian striker Thorstein Helstad from Brann, but managed to land Finnish striker Antti Pohja from Tampere as well as midfielder Fredrik Winsnes on loan from Rosenborg.

However, there is a certain lack of faith in Hammarby's ability to repeat their success of last season. Brewing giants Carlsberg, for instance, backed out of a deal that would have made them the club's sole shirt sponsors.

● Former Swedish national team coach Georg Ericsson has died at the age of 82. The former Norrkoping player led his country at two World Cup finals – 1974 and 1978 – having succeeded Orvar Bergmark in 1971.

Pentti Hietanen

FINLAND

Roiha moves on to Utrecht

HJK HELSINKI'S attack has been decimated after the sale of League top scorer Paulus Roiha to Utrecht in Holland, former top scorer Matti Hiukka to champions Tampere, and left-sided midfielder Peter Kopteff to Viking of Norway.

Roiha, a pacy and prolific 21-year-old, has been one of the brightest young players in the Finnish League in recent years.

Last season he set a domestic record by scoring in nine consecutive League matches.

However, while Roiha's departure had long been expected, Kopteff's move sparked anger at HJK.

"Viking's tendency to poach our players who are coming to the end of their contracts is deplorable," said director of football Tuomo Saarnio. "Before Kopteff, we lost Hannu Tihinen

Going Dutch...Paulus Roiha

and Toni Kuivasto to Viking without gaining any money."

Saarnio pointed to Janne Saarinen's move to Rosenborg last year as the proper way to go about business. "We received a decent transfer fee and they got a good player, which is the way it should be," he said.

Pentti Hietanen

ICELAND

Keflavik come out on top indoors

ACTION-STARVED followers of four of Iceland's top clubs enjoyed a rare pre-Christmas treat, with the staging of a tournament at the Reykjanes Sports Centre, currently the country's only full-sized indoor pitch.

Played over two days in mid-December, the tournament was won by hosts Keflavik, who overcame neighbours Grindavik in the Final following a penalty shoot-out.

Reigning champions IA Akranes were forced to settle for fourth place, after losing to Fram, also following a shoot-out.

Mid-winter football should become an increasingly available option in Iceland since a number of similar facilities are currently planned or under construction. This can only be of benefit to the game at every level.

Rab Christie

Pro-file Christian Poulsen

Cool, collected Dane bound for Schalke

PATIENCE is a virtue of Danish bright young thing Christian Poulsen. Early this season, the 21-year-old FC Copenhagen central midfielder turned down a chance to join English First Division side Birmingham City. If the youngster's intention was to bide his time and wait for better offers, it certainly worked out that way.

Representatives from no fewer than 17 top European sides were present at Copenhagen's Parkenstadion in November to see him make his international debut against Holland. After giving an excellent account of himself in the 1-1 draw, he and his agent were besieged.

Borussia Dortmund were the early favourites to win Poulsen's signature, yet it was their Ruhr rivals, Schalke, who eventually won the day. The youngster will now begin his four-year contract in June 2002 after a £4million deal was struck.

"We have to start a new chapter at Schalke next season, as many of our experienced players are leaving," said Schalke managing director Rudi Assauer. "We therefore have to look for top quality replacements, and Christian is one of these. He is a star and was rightly coveted by many leading clubs. I think we have a bargain."

Assauer may be right if Poulsen continues to improve at the same rapid rate as the past 18 months. He arrived at FC Copenhagen in summer 2000 from the relative backwater of Second Division Holbaek. But rather than filling a reserve berth, as expected, Poulsen immediately proved himself the complete midfielder – just as comfortable tackling and pressing as creating and goalscoring.

The rewards followed thick and fast: a guaranteed first-team place, a call-up to the Danish Under-21s, a pivotal role in FC Copenhagen's march to last season's League title and a full national team breakthrough late last year.

"Of course, it was a fantastic feeling when the Danish anthem was played before my first game for my country," recalls Poulsen. "But the game itself wasn't too different from a Superliga match against Viborg. Facing big stars such as Edgar Davids and Patrick Kluivert was not so special. They are only footballers like me."

A cool customer, indeed, and one with the brightest of futures.

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club FC Copenhagen
Country Denmark
Born February 28, 1980, in Holbaek
Previous clubs Asnaes, Holbaek
International debut November 2001, v Holland
International caps 1 (0 goals)
Honours Danish League 2001

Defeats spell end for Denizli

The former national team boss is ousted by Fenerbahce, writes Hasan Cemali

TURKEY

FENERBAHCE fired coach Mustafa Denizli following a run of five defeats in six games that left the former League leaders third in the table at the winter break.

He has been replaced by 53-year-old former 1860 Munich coach Werner Lorant, who had nine seasons in charge of the Bavarian club before being dismissed in October last year.

Denizli arrived at Fener in summer 2000 as a national hero having just guided Turkey to the quarter-finals of the European Championship. He overcame a difficult start in Istanbul to lead Fener to the 2000-01 championship, their first League title since 1996 and one, more significantly, that broke the stranglehold of city rivals Galatasaray.

This season proved more problematic, however. While the team started well in domestic competition, they had a disastrous Champions League campaign, losing all six first-phase matches to finish bottom of Group F and miss out on the UEFA Cup safety net.

Denizli was criticised for being too content to stick by the players he used last season, while the new signings he did bring in were not of sufficient quality. The squad were also beset by disciplinary problems, a number of injuries and suspensions to key players.

Besiktas, under German coach Christoph Daum, took advantage of Fener's defeats by winning five games in a row to go top ahead of Galatasaray on goal difference, though Gala had a game in hand.

Both big Istanbul sides have already been knocked out of the Turkish Cup, Gala losing by a golden goal to Second Division Erzurumspor, and Fenerbahce going out 2-1 to Denizlispor. The other quarter-finalists are Kocaelispor, who defeated holders Genclerbirligi in the last 16, Besiktas, Trabzonspor, Adanaspor, Gaziantepspor and Istanbulspor.

Time's up...Denizli paid the price as Fener slipped down the table

Back in Greece...Markarian

GREECE

Markarian in at Panathinaikos

SERGIO MARKARIAN, fired in November as Paraguayan national team coach, has taken charge at Panathinaikos. He succeeds Yiannis Kyrastas, who resigned following a 2-1 home League defeat by PAOK Salonika which left Pana 12 points behind leaders AEK Athens after nine rounds.

According to the club, Uruguay-born Markarian, 57, has signed an 18-month contract worth £965,000. He has coached in Greece before, taking charge of Ionikos during the 1998-99 season, immediately before his appointment by Paraguay. Despite leading the country to the World Cup finals, Markarian was fired following defeats by Venezuela (3-1) and Colombia (4-0) in their final qualifiers.

A joint committee formed by the Greek soccer federation, EPO, and its Turkish counterpart has agreed a budget of £1.4million to back the countries' joint bid to host the 2008 European Championship.

The professional clubs association, EPAE, is up in arms after Culture Minister Evangelos Venizelos, in charge of sports matters for the government, proposed that 10 per cent of the income derived from television rights should be allocated to the police to improve security at football matches.

The Greek sports writers' association has voted former Pana great Mimis Domazos the best Greek player of the past 50 years.

Lou Economopoulos

YUGOSLAVIA

Savicevic stays – for now

AFTER a two-month procedure to appoint a new national coach, the FA eventually decided on a compromise solution. Dejan Savicevic will stay in charge at least until June, the same month that Dusan Bajevic, the leading candidate to take the position permanently, comes to the end of his contract with PAOK Salonika in Greece.

The FA appear happy to continue with Savicevic for now since the Euro 2004 qualifiers do not start until September.

The FA has finally decided to begin reducing the number of professional clubs. From 2003-04, the First Division will have 16 teams, down from the current 18, while there will be only one Second Division, as opposed to four now, with 20 teams.

In the League, Partizan Belgrade overcame their recent crisis by winning the so-called autumn title by five points from Red Star.

Vladimir Novak

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Blazevic plays hard to get

FORMER Croatia coach Miroslav Blazevic remained favourite to take charge of the Bosnian national team, despite his repeated denials that he would return to his native soil.

The Bosnian FA has offered Travnik-born Blazevic £300,000 a year to take charge up to the 2004 European Championship. However, the 66-year-old, who failed to take Iran to the 2002 World Cup finals, has said he is considering other offers.

Meanwhile, opposition towards Blazevic's appointment is growing because of his alleged anti-Muslim statements. The vast majority of

the current national team squad are Muslims.

The ongoing uncertainty over Blazevic's future could leave the door open for Blaz Sliskovic, the assistant to former national coach Drago Smajlovic, to take the reins.

Zdravko Reic

CROATIA

Tudor takes top prize

JUVENTUS defender Igor Tudor has been named Croatian Footballer of the Year by the daily sports newspaper *Sportske novosti*, with Middlesbrough's Alen Boksic second and Robert Kovac of Bayern Munich third.

Hajduk Split keeper Stipe Pletikosa was named the best Croatia-based player, with 22-year-old Zagreb forward Ivica Olic the best new talent.

Zagreb, the season's surprise team, beat Hajduk 2-0 away in the final round before the winter break to seal their position as autumn champions.

Croatia's finest...Igor Tudor

Croatian international Silvio Maric has been making the headlines since returning to play for Dinamo Zagreb from FC Porto. Most recently, he shocked viewers by appearing to be drunk during a live TV show. Maric, who continued to drink while on air, has since said that he has given up alcohol and will prove his ability as a player to national coach Mirko Jozic ahead of the World Cup.

Zdravko Reic

SLOVENIA

Reward for Rudonja

MLADEN RUDONJA has been voted Slovenia's Player of the Year for 2001 after scoring the goal that clinched the country's place at their first World Cup finals in the qualifying play-off second leg against Romania.

Rudonja, not previously regarded as a key player for the national side, had never scored for his country before in more than 50 appearances.

Primorje were surprise League leaders at the winter break, lying four points clear of Koper after 20 games.

Zdravko Reic

MACEDONIA

Jovanovski calls it quits

GJORE JOVANOVSKI resigned as national coach, with three years of his contract still to run, saying it was for the good of Macedonian football.

Jovanovski was slated after his side suffered consecutive 5-0 defeats at home to Slovakia in the final World Cup qualifier and away to Hungary in a November friendly. He failed to win a single game after taking charge last summer, and his position became untenable when 23 players he had called up refused to travel to the Middle East for a New Year tournament.

Former Bulgaria coach Dimitar Penev and ex-Slovakia boss Jozef Adamec are the leading candidates to succeed him.

Struggling Osogovo Kocani have appointed Dragan Bocheski as coach to replace the sacked Alekso Mackov.

Michel Stojmanovski

MALTA

Sliema tipped for title

SLIEMA WANDERERS are favourites to win the League for the first time in six years after going into the winter break top on goal difference from Birkirkara. Their title challenge has been powered by Yugoslav striker Danilo Doncic, who is League top scorer with 19 goals.

Alfred Cardona has resigned as Birkirkara coach for health reasons and is replaced by Stephen Azzopardi.

Domenico Aquilina

Pro-file Umit Karan

Berlin-born forward leading the line for Galatasaray

GALATASARAY striker Umit Karan is another of those Turkish internationals of the 'Made in Germany' variety.

Like past Turkey star Oguz Cetin and current national team players Umit Davala, Tayfun Korkut, Tayfur Havutcu and Yildiray Basturk, Umit was born and raised in Germany.

He took his first steps as a footballer on the right wing for home city team Hertha Berlin's junior side, then Turkiyemspor, a top amateur club for Turkish immigrants in the capital.

Umit's speed, power and technique had a number of German Second Division clubs interested. However, his Turkish roots proved too strong and he jumped at the chance to sign a contract with Ankara club Genclerbirligi in 1997.

Umit's first season in Turkey was a mixed affair. He scored in home wins against Galatasaray and Fenerbahce, but unfortunately they were his only goals, and his form was so inconsistent that he was dropped to the bench for much of the time. "Even today, I get a shiver down my spine when I think of the explosion of joy I felt when I scored against Galatasaray and Fenerbahce," says Umit. "But I quickly realised I hadn't yet made it. There was still a lot for me to learn."

So there was. But having dedicated himself to working on his finishing, off-the-ball runs and becoming an out-and-out striker rather than a flank operator, he developed into one of Turkey's most dangerous marksmen. Umit scored 14 goals in 1998-99, 18 the following term and 11 in an injury-hit campaign last season.

As expected, he joined Galatasaray last summer, though it was not a conventional transfer. In a ploy to get their man cut-price, Gala allegedly arranged for Umit to move on a Bosman from Genclerbirligi to Bulgarian club Beroe. The Turkish champions then took him on loan.

It was a circuitous route indeed, yet Galatasaray will claim the ends justified the means. Umit has been outstanding in the Champions League, in particular, playing with gusto and intelligence when asked to perform as the sole striker away from home and notching six goals in all. "A lot of people thought Galatasaray would slip away once Jardel, Hagi, Popescu and Taffarel left," he says. "But I think we are proving that it's not so."

Until now, Umit's international career has almost exclusively been as a substitute. Perhaps it's time for Turkey coach Senol Gunes to use him and his big-match temperament as a starter.

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Galatasaray
Country Turkey
Born October 1, 1976, in Berlin
Previous clubs Hertha Berlin (Ger), Turkiyemspor Berlin (Ger), Genclerbirligi
International debut February 2000, v Norway
International caps 7 (0 goals)

Big chance for Bruckner

The Under-21 coach has taken charge of the senior national team, writes Roy Kitson

CZECH REPUBLIC

KAREL BRUCKNER, the country's highly successful Under-21 coach, has been appointed to lead the senior national team during the Euro 2004 campaign.

The 62-year-old succeeds Jozef Chovanec, who stepped down after the Czech Republic's failure to reach the World Cup finals.

Bruckner, who was also Chovanec's assistant, is an excellent tactician and particularly adept at developing young talent. He notably led the Under-21s to the runners-up spot at the European Championship in Slovakia in 2000.

The original favourite for the top job, Jozef Jarabinsky, withdrew his candidature 24 hours before the announcement.

Miroslav Beranek, formerly Bruckner's right-hand man at Under-21 level, now steps up to be his assistant with the senior side. Beranek has also taken the reins at struggling Slavia Prague following the resignation of Josef Pesice after just six months in charge.

Sparta Prague finished the autumn campaign on top of the table just ahead of Viktoria Zizkov and Bohemians. The champions have boosted their squad by buying forwards Lubomir Blaha and Vladimir Malar from Synot, and midfielder Tomas Cizek from Jablonec.

Borussia Dortmund midfielder Tomas Rosicky has been named Czech Player of the Year, ahead of Pavel Nedved of Juventus and Sparta Prague's Jiri Jarosik.

● Josef 'Pepi' Bican, a member of Hugo Meisl's Austrian 'wunderteam' of the 1930s, has died at the age of 88. Bican played 19 times for Austria, including appearances at the 1934 World Cup finals, having shown prolific goalscoring form for Viennese club sides Rapid and Austria. He moved on to Czechoslovak side Slavia Prague, and eventually appeared 14 times for that country's national side. In total, Bican scored 643 League goals.

Top tactician...Karel Bruckner

Premier class...Jerzy Dudek

POLAND

Dudek and 'Oli' top polls

LIVERPOOL goalkeeper Jerzy Dudek and Panathinaikos forward Emmanuel Olisadebe both topped Poland Footballer of the Year polls, organised by two separate publications.

Dudek, 28, award winner in the *Sport* newspaper, has immediately proved his class in the English Premier League after moving to Anfield from Feyenoord in August for a Polish record £4.9million.

Nigeria-born Olisadebe, 23, topped the poll organised by *Piłka Nozna* magazine. 'Oli' has scored 10 goals in 13 matches for Poland since taking citizenship in summer 2000.

Former national coach Janusz Wojcik was sacked recently by Cypriot side Anorthosis Famagusta. Wojcik was fired by Slask Wroclaw last season.

Dariusz Kurowski

SLOVAKIA

Jurkemik takes charge

LADISLAV JURKEMIK is the new man in charge of the national team after the first choice, Czech Under-21 coach Karel Bruckner, agreed to take the helm with the Czechs' senior side.

Nevertheless, 48-year-old Jurkemik is a popular choice and has proved his ability, at least at club level, by leading MSK Zilina to the top of the Slovakian League at the winter break.

Jurkemik, who succeeds Jozef Adamec, is an ex-Czech international and played in the 1976 European Championship-winning side.

Celtic midfielder Lubomir Moravcik was named Slovakian Player of the Year in a poll conducted by the *Pravda* newspaper.

Roy Kitson

RUSSIA

Nigmatullin: the new 'gentleman' of Verona

RUSLAN NIGMATULLIN, the national team keeper, has joined Serie A side Verona from Lokomotiv Moscow following his great season in the Russian League, Champions League, UEFA Cup and World Cup qualifiers.

The news that Nigmatullin had gone to Italy, on a four-and-a-half-year contract, came as no surprise to local fans, since he has long been expected to move to one of Serie A's many interested clubs.

The keeper won every possible award in 2001 – from the Russian top flight's Most Valuable Player to the 'Gentleman of the Year' prize, awarded for sportsmanship and fair play. The 27-year-old was also voted Footballer of the Year in three separate national polls.

Victor Gusev

UKRAINE

Buriak steps up

FORMER Soviet Union international Leonid Buriak has been elected as Ukraine's national team boss following the resignation of Valerii Lobanovskyi.

The 48-year old, until now the assistant national coach, received 18 votes out of 20 at a meeting of the federation executive committee. He was awarded a two-year contract, with a two-year extension on the cards should Ukraine qualify for Euro 2004.

The public's popular choice, Oleg Blokhin, had been ruled out of contention because of political wrangling and certain personal matters.

Lobanovskyi, 63, stepped down after Ukraine's failure to qualify for the 2002 World Cup finals.

Before becoming assistant national coach, Buriak led the Indiana University team in the USA, Ukrainian clubs Niva Ternopil and Chornomorets, and Russia's Arsenal Tula.

Oleg Zadernovsky

AUSTRIA

Stronach rewields his axe

AUSTRIA WIEN president Franz Stronach has instituted another coaching change, bringing in Didi Constantini to replace co-bosses Anton Pfeffer and Walter Hormann. That duo had been appointed after Dutchman Arie Haan was fired in the autumn.

Constantini, recently the assistant national team coach, has a rough ride ahead. Not only are his new club 23 points behind League leaders FC Tirol, but he must also be aware that he was not first choice for the job. Stronach failed to lure Walter Schachner from Karnten before turning to Constantini.

Meanwhile, Karnten president Jorg Haider, the right-wing politician, has been forced to back down after making defamatory comments about referees. Haider's outburst, during which he described match officials as "crooks" and "corrupt", came after Karnten had had three goals disallowed for offside in a defeat by Austria Wien.

The Austrian Referees' Association threatened legal action, but Haider defused the row with a public apology.

Nick Bidwell

BULGARIA

Markov comes in for Mladenov

FORMER international midfielder Plamen Markov is the new man in charge of Bulgaria. The 44-year-old succeeds Stoicho Mladenov, who was fired after the humiliating 6-0 defeat by the Czech Republic in the final World Cup qualifier.

Markov was most recently in charge of Second Division Vidima-Rakovski, having previously had spells at Grenoble in France and CSKA Sofia.

Former Internazionale coach Luigi Simoni has become the latest to take charge of CSKA. The 62-year-old replaces the sacked Asparuh Nikodimov.

International forward Georgi Ivanov was named Bulgarian Player of the Year for the second time running. The Levski Sofia man won 163 votes in a poll of journalists, 37 more than runner-up Stilian Petrov, of Celtic.

Top division side Neftohimik Bourgas have changed their name to Naftex during the winter break.

Michael Bowesfield

MOLDOVA

Rogaciov best again

FORWARD Serghey Rogaciov beat off competition from his national team strike partner, Serghey Clescenco, to win the Player of the Year award.

Rogaciov, whose club side is Saturn Ramenskoye of Russia, received 256 points in a poll of coaches, referees and media representatives. It is the second time the 24-year-old has won the award, his previous victory coming in 1996.

Clescenco, of Hapoel Tel Aviv, won 213 points.

Miron Goikman

Back-to-back awards...Georgi Ivanov

ARMENIA

Pyunik take the title

YEREVAN side Pyunik won the League title despite two surprise defeats – to Mika Ashtarak and eventual runners-up Zvartnots – during the closing stages. Pyunik finished five points clear, while striker Arman Karamian was League top scorer with 21 goals.

National team defender Sarkis Hovsepyan won the Armenian Player of the Year award, decided by a poll of journalists.

Vladimir Kalinkovich

Pro-file Ronald Brunmayr

Award-winning striker scoring for free for Grazer

NO ONE was taken aback when coaches in the Austrian Bundesliga voted Grazer AK striker Ronald Brunmayr the nation's Player of the Year for 2001.

With 22 goals in as many League games this season, Brunmayr led the national scoring charts by a country mile at the winter break. If the 26-year-old can maintain the same sort of clever movement and ruthless finishing during the rest of the season, more individual prizes could be in the pipeline. Brunmayr is in contention for the 2001-02 ESM Golden Shoe and has a fighting chance of breaking the all-time Austrian First Division record of 42 goals, set by Hans Krankl at Rapid Wien in 1977-78.

"To be named Footballer of the Year is the high point of my career so far," says Brunmayr, the first Grazer AK player to win the accolade. "It's a great honour, and confirmation that experts think my performances have been consistently good. It's an incentive and an obligation too. I have to carry on in this vein, carry on improving."

Brunmayr is no one-season wonder. He notched 19 goals for SV Ried in 1999-00 and another 15 for Grazer last term, following his summer 2000 transfer.

Yet despite these impressive figures, the forward has won just five caps – only two as a starter – and has yet to score for his country. "I think I have shown what I can do over a long period of time, but national coach Otto Baric just didn't have any faith in me," says Brunmayr. "It's difficult to prove yourself when you're given only 45 minutes against Liechtenstein and 60 minutes against Switzerland.

"I hope I will have opportunities now that Baric is no longer in charge of the team. We are told Austria have a striker crisis. So when the new coach looks at the goalscoring charts, he must pick me. With a goal a game in the first half of the season, I would like to know who's better than me."

Despite Brunmayr's apparently supreme confidence, he does not envisage moving to one of Europe's top leagues. "Naturally, it's the goal of every professional in Austria to go abroad," he says. "But it's no easy task there. At Austrian clubs everyone has faith in you, while in other countries you end up on the bench or in the stands if you miss a couple of chances.

"It's also hard to impress foreign clubs. The Austrian League has no reputation. It makes no difference if you score 10 or 30 goals in Austria. It doesn't count abroad."

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Grazer AK
Country Austria
Born February 17, 1975, in Steyr
Previous clubs SV Garsten, Vorwarts Steyr, FC Linz, Austria Wien, SV Ried
International debut August 2000, v Hungary
International caps 5 (0 goals)

Teixeira and co stand accused

The Congressional inquiry into Brazilian football has condemned leading figures. Brian Homewood reports

Under fire...confederation president Ricardo Teixeira and former Brazil coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo face the media

BRAZIL

A CONGRESSIONAL investigation into Brazilian football has ended its probe with a devastating report which, it says, demonstrates how the sport has been plundered by unscrupulous directors over the past few years.

The 1,600-page document, unanimously approved by a commission of inquiry in the Senate, recommends that criminal proceedings be brought against 17 leading figures. They include Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) president Ricardo Teixeira and former national team coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo. The directors were variously accused of tax evasion, "illegal appropriation of funds" (ie putting their hands in the till) and fraudulent foreign exchange operations.

Teixeira took the brunt of the report, compiled by Senator Geraldo Althoff. In a session broadcast live on cable television, Althoff accused the president of negligent administration, mixing personal and CBF business, living in luxury at his confederation's expense, and using CBF money to finance political parties and campaigns.

"Lack of control, disorganisation and bad management reign in the CBF," said Althoff. "Mr Teixeira, as president, is directly responsible for creating an environment which is ripe for an administrative disaster."

Althoff said that on one trip to New York, Teixeira – who has run the CBF since 1989 – spent £810 on limousines in four days. On another visit, he splurged nearly £9,000 in restaurant bills in 18 days, an average of around £700 per meal. Althoff added that between 1998 and 2000, the CBF frittered away £8.82 million in air fares and hotels, all with the same travel agency, without providing receipts for expenses incurred.

However, Teixeira did not just treat himself, according to the report. Althoff also accused the CBF boss of financing trips to the World Cups in 1994 and 1998 for people who had nothing to do with the sport, including magistrates and other officials of the Brazilian judicial system. Five officials from Rio de Janeiro were given a 20-day trip to the 1994 World Cup at a total cost of £207,000 – a jaunt that was criticised at the time in legal circles as being unethical.

Althoff said that more officials were treated in 1998. The daughter of one of them happened to be a judge who shortly afterwards ruled in Teixeira's favour in a libel case he brought against journalist Juca Kfouri, a constant critic of Teixeira's administration. The decision was overturned shortly afterwards, Althoff said, because the journalist "was not given the right to defend himself".

Althoff highlighted other cases in which directors travelled abroad with their wives at the CBF's expense, even though there was no international football taking place at their destinations. One trip lasted 34 days and involved visits to Prague, Budapest, Vienna, Venice, Paris and Zurich.

Teixeira was equally generous when it came to donating CBF money for political campaigns, the report said. Political parties and electoral campaigns both benefited, even though the CBF was in grave financial difficulties at the time.

Althoff said the "voracity" and "lack of control" over CBF expenditure caused the confederation to accumulate debts of nearly £16m between 1995 and 2000, even though its income rocketed during the same period thanks to television and

sponsorship deals. These included the much-publicised £110m deal with Nike.

Meanwhile, expenditure on staff jumped 400 per cent. Teixeira, for instance, awarded himself £35,862 in 1998, an amount that leapt to £118,965 in 2000. This practice was forbidden by CBF statutes, and though a meeting at the start of 1998 voted to change this, the decision was invalid because not everyone who was entitled to vote was present.

Sixteen other figures were incriminated by the report, including the presidents of Vasco da Gama (Eurico Miranda) and Flamengo (Edmundo Santos Silva). The former, one of Brazilian football's most notorious figures and himself a member of Congress, was accused of diverting Vasco funds into a third party's bank account and then helping himself to the money. Some of it was used to finance his own election campaign.

Former Brazil coach Luxemburgo, who has just been sacked by Corinthians, was found to have earned over £5m between 1995 and 2000. In addition, the commission of inquiry discovered that more than £2m of this had not been declared to the tax authorities.

The report was the result of 14 months' work, during which the commission enacted powers to investigate bank accounts of officials, federations and clubs, and interrogated those suspected or wrongdoing.

A similar report in the lower house commission ended in June with similar findings. However, the so-called "Ball Bench" – the CBF lobby in Congress – managed to obstruct and discredit it.

This time there were no doubts. The Senate's report was unanimously approved by the commission and taken straight to Brazil's sports minister, Carlos Melles, who promised government legislation to make clubs and federations transparent and accountable.

"Football has an enormous social influence and economic importance," said Melles. "It has to have an administration worthy of this."

In other words, directors will have to stop treating Brazilian football as their own private business.

Atletico outshine Big Medals

ATLETICO PARANAENSE won the Brazilian championship for the first time following a competition dominated by modest but well-organised clubs rather than the big spenders.

Atletico beat Sao Caetano 5-2 on aggregate in the Final. The first leg, which Atletico won 4-2, was a thriller. The second was sadly typical of modern Brazilian football – cut-throat tackling, diving, brawling and a lenient referee, in this case Carlos Eugenio Simon. Even the stretcher bearers lost their tempers as they became involved in a pushing match with the Atletico bench in the first half.

Atletico had never reached the Final before, while Sao Caetano, who were runners-up for the second year in a row, had not even played in the First Division before last year. Atletico themselves spent several seasons out of the top flight and had never done better than third place in 1983.

Unsung heroes...Atletico Paranaense celebrate lifting their first Brazilian championship

But this was very much a competition for the underdog. As the likes of Sao Caetano flourished (their players have breakfast in a scruffy bar opposite the club before training), the traditional top teams with their so-called 'Big Medals' – BMW-driving big-name players with monstrous salaries – were falling by the wayside. Vasco da Gama, Cruzeiro, Corinthians, Flamengo and Palmeiras all failed to reach the last eight, while Sao Paulo and Gremio were knocked out in the quarter-finals.

Flamengo, the country's most popular club, only narrowly avoided a humiliating relegation after a campaign notable for the continual squabbling of rival Big Medals Edilson and Dejan Petkovic, and the dreadful form of Vampeta, another Big Medal who was eventually dropped for his own good.

Cruzeiro were another Big Medal outfit to flounder. Having signed Colombian midfielder Freddy Rincon and well-known trouble-maker Edmundo before the tournament, at huge expense, they finished the competition without either. The writing was on the wall when both were sent off on their debut. Edmundo, who received another two red cards, was eventually shipped off to Japan after missing a penalty against his old club Vasco – two days after an interview in which he admitted it would be painful to score against them. Rincon was kicked out after falling out with Marco Aurelio – the third and final coach of their campaign.

The other Big Medal to flop was a coach, Vanderlei Luxemburgo. The former Brazil boss, famous for having an expensive taste in just about everything, was fired after nine months in charge following a dismal 18th-place finish.

The one exception to the rule was, as usual, Romario. The 35-year-old, still nurturing hopes of a trip to next year's World Cup, finished as top scorer in the competition with 21 goals and was the only big earner to justify the investment in him. Romario, however, clearly lost out by not taking part in the knockout stages and was eclipsed by previously unknown Atletico Paranaense striker Alex Mineiro.

While Romario was holidaying in Miami then opening a bingo hall in Rio, Alex Mineiro scored eight goals, including two hat-tricks, in Atletico's last four matches.

Brian Homewood

Racing pip River

Eric Weil on a dramatic finale to the opening championship title race

ARGENTINA

One step closer...Racing Club's Gabriel Loeschbor celebrates his vital goal against Velez Sarsfield

LONG-TIME leaders Racing Club secured their first League title for 35 years when edging out River Plate by a point in a traumatic end to the opening championship.

Racing's 1-1 draw away to Velez Sarsfield was enough to clinch top spot, despite River hammering Rosario Central 6-1 at home in their final game. Gabriel Loeschbor put the leaders ahead 10 minutes into the second half, and though Velez equalised through Ernesto Chirumbolo, Racing held on for the point they needed.

At one stage it appeared that the final, decisive round of matches might not be played until February following the civil unrest in Argentina, which brought down the government and left more than 20 people dead.

However, it was then decided that the two games with a bearing on who would win the championship should be played with immediate effect, with the rest of the round postponed until February 3.

Racing's League triumph was a remarkable achievement for a club only saved from bankruptcy after being taken over by a private company, Blanquiceleste, early last year. None of Racing's players could be classed as stars, although goalkeeper Gustavo Campagnuolo and midfielder Adrian Bastia stood out during the tournament. Rather, coach Reinaldo Merlo has got the best out of a hard-working side which cost next to nothing to put together.

The club have also benefited from having a large support. Their average home gates have been more than 40,000 this season, more than double those of big guns River Plate and Boca Juniors. Racing even managed to fill two stadiums on the last day – a capacity 50,000 crowd filled Velez Sarsfield's ground, while 40,000 packed into Racing's venue to watch the match on a big screen.

The wild celebrations at the end in the two stadiums, in the streets of Racing's home town, Avellaneda, and in nearby Buenos Aires were reminiscent of those that followed Argentina's two World Cup triumphs, especially because the two teams wear similar light blue and white shirts.

Fernando Marin, head of Blanquiceleste and a lifelong fan of the club, was in buoyant mood after the match, saying: "Many people said this 'privatisation' would not work, and I dedicate this title to those who supported me."

Martin Cardetti hit a hat-trick for River against Rosario to make him almost certainly tournament top scorer with 17 goals. However, his side's title spurt came just too late to overhaul Racing, who at one stage had an eight-point lead. The general impression is that River were a better team than Racing and would have won the title play-off that would have been staged had the sides finished level on points.

River's internal problems did not help their cause, with the presidential election causing an unwelcome distraction. There were also difficulties on the field. Coach Ramon Diaz took time to find his best line-up and the team had a tendency to flag during the second half of games. This proved fatal in the classic derby with Boca Juniors in the sixth round of games and again in the match away to Racing in the 16th round. Both games ended 1-1 after River Plate led 1-0 at the break.

River's presidential issue, at least, has been resolved, with 39-year-old former club secretary Jose Maria Aguilar winning the election.

Boca Juniors ended the season without coach Carlos Bianchi, under whom they won six titles in three seasons. His reasons for leaving have not been made public, although it is known he had serious differences with club officials.

"I would have liked to coach Boca in a thousand games," Bianchi said after his 188th and final match in charge; his assistant, Carlos Ischia, said: "I know that Carlos did not want to leave and was very enthusiastic about continuing at Boca."

Bianchi has been replaced by Uruguayan Oscar Tabarez, who won the 1992 opening title with Boca during his previous spell in charge.

However, the club have been hit by a new problem. As the result of a court action brought by former striker Claudio Caniggia, Boca have had their bank accounts frozen and been prevented from buying or selling players until they pay the money they owe him.

Caniggia successfully sued the club through the Argentinian courts for £2.3million, the amount he claimed he was owed under the terms of his 1996 contract. The deal stated that Caniggia would be paid £25,000 per match until June 1999. But he did not receive any money after Bianchi took charge of the side in 1998 and decided that the forward was not part of his plans.

Meanwhile, Caniggia's former Boca team-mate Diego Maradona has been given his official coaching certificate by the FA's coaching school, despite never having done the course. This enables him to sit on the bench in any future capacity as a coach, something he has been denied during two previous employments.

Money due...Claudio Caniggia

CLUB COMPETITIONS

Mercosur Cup refuses to die

THE Mercosur and Merconorte Cups were played for the fourth and final time in 2001...well, almost.

The Mercosur Cup Final second leg between Argentina's San Lorenzo and Flamengo of Brazil was due to be played in Buenos Aires on the day that civil unrest in the country brought down the government. As a result, the match was postponed, with no date for the rearranged game yet decided.

San Lorenzo had drawn the first leg 0-0 in Rio de Janeiro and seemed poised to become the first non-Brazilian club to take the trophy. The previous three editions have been won by Palmeiras, Flamengo and Vasco da Gama.

The Merconorte Cup is complete, however. Millonarios of Colombia beat Ecuador's Emelec 3-1 on penalties after a 2-2 aggregate draw. Venezuelan keeper Rafael Dudamel was the hero of the hour, making three saves during the shoot-out.

Colombian sides won all four editions of the tournament; indeed, Emelec were the first non-Colombian side to reach a Final. Millonarios had been runners-up in 2000.

The tournaments, featuring the top teams from across South America, plus Mexico and the United States, were essentially designed to attract a TV audience. However, viewing figures failed to live up to expectations. At the same time, many clubs put out understrength or even reserve sides, preferring instead to concentrate on their domestic campaigns. This trend, in turn, affected crowd numbers. One Merconorte Cup match, for example, drew only six paying spectators.

Even the Libertadores Cup, South America's premier club competition, has suffered from teams putting out weakened sides when it suits them.

This has prompted CONMEBOL to take action. Confederation secretary Eduardo De Luca said: "We are going to be much tougher from now on and are possibly going to impose fines on clubs fielding weak teams in this big-money tournament."

Eric Weil

Round-up

SOUTH AMERICA

CESARE MALDINI, Italy's coach at France 98, will lead **PARAGUAY** at this summer's World Cup. He replaces Sergio Markarian, who was sacked after his side lost their last two qualifying games. Maldini, 69, has recently been working as Milan's chief scout, having briefly taken charge of the club as caretaker last season.

At club level, Olimpia will, after all, appear in the Libertadores Cup – for the 33rd time – despite a poor season. They qualified, together with 12 de Octubre, after finishing in the top two of a six-team qualifying tournament.

URUGUAY: Closing championship winners Nacional beat opening holders Danubio over two legs to retain their overall title. Nacional came from behind in both games, drawing the home first leg 2-2 having been 2-0 down and then beating Danubio 2-1 in the second tie after going behind early on.

Despite Nacional's title victory, their third in the past four years, coach Hugo De Leon has quit, as he said he would.

Penarol have dismissed coach Julio Ribas. His replacement is Gregorio Perez, back for a third spell in charge.

CHILE: Santiago Wanderers won the national championship by six points after finishing with a 10-game unbeaten run. The club, who are coached by national team boss Jorge Garces, had not won a title for 33 years. Colo Colo have appointed former player Jaime Pizarro as coach. He replaces Roberto Hernandez.

BOLIVIA: Closing champions Oriente Petrolero retained the overall title despite losing the first leg of the play-off Final 4-1 to opening holders Bolivar. Oriente bounced back with 4-3 and 2-0 wins in the best-of-three-legs showdown.

Oriente's 18-year-old forward Jose Alfredo Castillo was the hero of the season. He netted all four goals in the Final second leg and both in the third, having finished as regular season top scorer with 36 goals.

ECUADOR: Emelec won the overall championship by topping the six-team final Liguilla.

COLOMBIA: America retained the overall title by beating Independiente Medellin 3-0 on aggregate in the Final.

Ex-America and Colombia player Norberto Cadavid has been killed by gunmen in the centre of Medellin. He was 39.

PERU: Cusco side Cienciano beat another provincial team, Estudiantes de Medicina of Ica, in a play-off to decide the closing championship winners.

Eric Weil

Paraguay challenge...Cesare Maldini

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

PACHUCA claimed their second **MEXICAN** title in three years when they beat Tigres 3-1 on aggregate in the play-off Final to win the 2001 Winter League.

Pachuca won the first leg convincingly, 2-0, with first-half goals from Walter Silvani and Sergio Santana, and travelled to meet Tigres confident of claiming the title.

Tigres took the lead in the return leg, thanks to a splendid individual goal by Jesus Olalde. But despite continued pressure on Pachuca, they failed to score the goal that would have levelled the aggregate score. Instead, Pachuca hit Tigres with a breakaway goal through Silvani, his sixth of the play-offs.

Pachuca and Tigres recorded semi-final wins over Toluca and Cruz Azul respectively.

JAMAICA: Carl Brown has been named as new national team technical director. The 51-year-old was previously assistant to all three of the Brazilians to have held the post – Rene Simoes, Sebastiao Lazaroni and Clovis de Oliveira – and took charge of team affairs, with Peter Cargill, after De Oliveira was fired last year. It is Brown's second spell as technical director, his previous term having run from 1990 to 1994.

HONDURAS: Ramon Maradiaga has been fired as national coach after failing to take the team to the World Cup finals.

UNITED STATES: Earnie Stewart was named Honda Player of the Year in a poll of American sports journalists. The forward, who plays his club football for Dutch side NAC Breda, was the United States' leading scorer in 2001.

CANADA: International Garret Kusch has retired from professional football in order to study to be a chiropractor. The 28-year-old won 22 caps for his country.

Michael Bowesfield

Champions of Africa...Al Ahly skipper Walid Salaadin hoists the trophy

Al Ahly back on top

Mark Gleeson sees the Egyptian side win their third Champions Cup

AL AHLY, Africa's club of the 20th century, are back on the winners' podium again after taking the continent's leading club competition for the first time in 14 years.

The Cairo side, whose support base must be among the largest in the world, won the African Champions League with a flattering 4-1 aggregate victory over Mamelodi Sundowns in the Final.

Sundowns hit the woodwork five times during the two legs and scored the opening goal in the tie, but were then taught a lesson in finishing by Al Ahly's youthful line-up.

Khaled Bebo proved the hero, hitting a second leg hat-trick having been suspended for the opening tie in Pretoria. That finished 1-1 after Al Ahly managed to weather Sundowns' early storm.

Zambian international Gift Kampamba gave Sundowns the lead after 26 minutes with a brilliant solo effort. He picked up the ball in the centre circle, ran at the Ahly defence, turned veteran Hady Khashaba inside out and then unleashed a cracking left-foot drive past Essam Al-Hadari.

But though the South Africans had myriad chances after that, they all went begging, with Al-Hadari in brilliant form.

A rare Ahly foray in the second half caught out Sundowns. Mohamed Farouk put over a cross and Said Abdelhafiz burst ahead of a ball-watching Lovers Mohlala to score a surprise equaliser.

It was an invaluable away goal and left Sundowns needing to score at least once in the second leg to stand any chance. They also had to overcome the intimidatory crowd of some 80,000 in Cairo.

The South Africans did look the better side in the first half but again could create only one real chance, with another Kampamba effort pushed wide by Al-Hadari.

But in the 37th minute, Al Ahly burst on to the counter-attack. The speed of Bebo lured Sundowns defender Fabian McCarthy into a clumsy tackle, which Moroccan referee Abderrahim El Arjoun deemed a penalty.

Bebo got up off the turf to convert and was in the right place again just on the stroke of half-time as Farouk's quick counter provided a perfect square pass. Suddenly, Ahly had broken the shackles and were comfortably in the lead at the break.

But there were still too many anxious moments in the second half as Sundowns dazzled in the build-up only to consistently fumble the final pass. Bennett Mnguni hit the woodwork, and Al-Hadari brought off a sequence of confident stops as Sundowns strikers aimed straight at him.

Bebo, 25, crowned his night of triumph by putting the final touch to another breakaway in the last minute. His hat-trick goal set off fireworks over the stadium and massed celebrations throughout Cairo, where Ahly are almost a religious institution.

The Egyptian side have now won a record seven continental titles – three Champions Cups and four Cup-winners Cups. Their most recent victory sets up a tie with South Africa's Kaizer Chiefs, the African Cup-winners Cup holders, in the African Super Cup in Cairo on March 15.

"We deserved the victory," said Al Ahly coach Manuel Jose. "After drawing 1-1 in the first leg we were under a lot of pressure and at times my players were very nervous.

"In the first half we played very well and scored two goals but the second half was harder for us because I told the players at the interval that we had to score a third to finish it off.

"We wanted to win the Champions League very badly. But we defended too deeply at times and that made it difficult for us. But over the two matches we were the better team. We did have some luck, but that is part of the game.

"Winning the Cup is good for the players and for the club because they are very young. It's also good for Egyptian football."

Asked whether he had any qualms about playing Bebo in the second leg following his suspension, Jose said: "I had no doubts. He's very fast and we know the way Sundowns play – their defence push up in line looking for offside. Bebo's pace caught them and he took his chances well."

Ethiopia eclipse Kenya

ETHIOPIA were surprise winners of the annual East and Central African Senior Challenge Cup in December. They triumphed in the regional event for only the second time with a 2-1 win over highly-fancied Kenya in Kigali, the capital of host nation Rwanda.

The Ethiopians received a heroes' welcome on returning to their homeland, where they had enjoyed their only previous success in the tournament, in 1987.

Yordanus Abey and Shanko Mamoalem put Ethiopia 2-0 up before half-time in the Final. Kenya, without injured captain Robert Mambo, then missed a 60th-minute penalty before pulling a goal back seven minutes later from another spot kick, Titus Mulama converting.

Ethiopia won a penalty of their own 15 minutes from time, but Abey blasted wide.

Defeat has put further pressure on Kenya's German coach Reinhard Fabisch, who said: "I'm disappointed but the better team won."

Rwanda beat their own B team on penalties to take the bronze medal. Rwanda were allowed to enter two teams after the withdrawal of Sudan, who have since been suspended by the Confederation of East and Central African Football Associations (CECAFA) for failing to participate in its tournaments over the past two years.

The Rwanda tournament proved a misery for holders Uganda, who went out in the quarter-finals, and Tanzania. The latter, who had recently won a four-nation tournament on home soil, were also quarter-final losers.

Mark Gleeson

Round-up

Welcome to the Gulf...Maher Kanzari has joined Saudi club Al Nasr

Tunisians to and fro

FORMER **TUNISIAN** national team coach Faouzi Benzerti has been sacked by Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. At home, Frenchman Bernard Casoni, the former captain of Marseille, is the new coach of Etoile Sahel. Tunisian international Maher Kanzari has moved back to the Middle East for a second spell, joining Saudi Arabia's Al Nasr from Esperance. Sirajeddine Chihi has also left Esperance, for United Arab Emirates side Al Wahda, where he will team up with South African striker Phil Masinga.

Elsewhere in **NORTH AFRICA**, Zamalek's win over Al Ahly in the Cairo derby extended their unbeaten run to 37 matches. The sequence, an **EGYPTIAN** record, stretches over two seasons. Al Ittihad from Alexandria have appointed German Diethelm Ferner as coach. He led Zamalek to their 1996 African Champions Cup triumph.

SUDAN-born Fawzi Al-Taaisha has been fired by Al Ahli of Dubai, while Portuguese Armando Costa has been appointed **LIBYAN** national team coach.

CENTRAL AFRICA

Daniel Wansi, a 19-year-old striker with Cintra Yaounde, has been named **CAMEROON'S** Footballer of the Year for 2001. Marcus Mokake, captain of Cup winners Fovu de Baham, finished second, with Union Douala keeper Etame Soppo third. Wansi has since signed for Tunisia's Etoile Sahel.

RWANDA captain Hamid Ndikumana has been loaned by Anderlecht to fellow Belgians Verbroedering Geel.

EAST AFRICA

Jeanne d'Arc won the **REUNION** Cup to qualify for continental club competition for the first time. Roberto Elcaman, 17, scored the only goal in their win over Excelsior in the Final.

Gilbert Bayaram has been named **MAURITIUS** Footballer of the Year after helping Olympique de Moka to the League title. Bayaram has since joined Cup holders US Beau Bassin-Rose Hill.

Moses Basena has been appointed coach of **UGANDAN** champions SC Villa, replacing Paul Hasule, who took the side to a record 17th League title.

TANZANIA will stage this year's East and Central African Senior Challenge Cup.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Several spectators, including children, were injured after rioting caused the abandonment of the **MALAWIAN** derby between Big Bullets and Wanderers. The match, played in front of 60,000 in Blantyre, finished in a draw, allowing Bullets to maintain their lead at the top of the Super League.

Highlanders have clinched a third successive title in **ZIMBABWE**, beating nearest rivals AmaZulu in their final match. International striker Maxwell Dube, from relegation-threatened Chapungu United, was named Footballer of the Year. Meanwhile, former Liverpool goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar has denied widespread reports that he is to take over as national coach. In the meantime he has taken over at struggling South African club Hellenic.

BOTSWANA beat Lesotho 1-0 with a goal from second-half substitute Oliver Pikati to win a four-nation tournament on home soil. Namibia and a junior side from Zimbabwe were the other participants.

Moroka Swallows were top of the **SOUTH AFRICAN** Premier League at the Christmas break, three points ahead of promoted Black Leopards and defending champions Orlando Pirates.

WEST AFRICA

Asante Kotoko won the **GHANAIAN** FA Cup, a golden goal from substitute Kwaku Duah seeing off neighbours King Faisal.

Six police officers have been charged with manslaughter following the deaths of 126 spectators in Accra last May in a stampede after the clash between Kotoko and champions Hearts of Oak. The police had reacted to rioting fans by firing tear gas into the crowd, leading to the stampede.

Mark Gleeson

Antlers retain the title

The Kashima club won a thrilling finale, write Mike Plastow and Yumiko Nagae

JAPAN

KASHIMA ANTLERS retained the J.League title by beating Jubilo Iwata 3-2 on aggregate in the championship Final.

The victory capped a remarkable season for the 2000 treble winners, who became the first team to win back-to-back League trophies since Verdy Kawasaki in 1994.

Antlers had a miserable First Stage, finishing only 11th. However, they roared back to win the Second Stage by a point from First Stage winners Jubilo.

Jubilo sped to an early lead in the home first leg of the play-off Final, with Toshihiro Hattori converting a penalty and 34-year-old Masashi Nakayama hitting a spectacular second after dribbling all the way from the halfway line.

Antlers were also reduced to 10 men when Takayuki Suzuki was sent off for a second bookable offence. However, Yutaka Akita pulled a goal back 10 minutes from the end, heading home from a corner, and a fumble by Jubilo keeper Arno Van Zwam gifted an equaliser to Tomoyuki Hirase with six minutes left.

The return, played in front of a packed house of 40,115 at the Kashima stadium, was a classic. Both sides exerted fierce pressure, which was only repelled by some masterful defending. The deadlock was finally broken 10 minutes into extra time when Antlers playmaker Mitsuo Ogasawara scored direct from a free-kick that left Van Zwam rooted to the spot. It was the perfect finish for the youngster, who had already been voted the championship's Most Valuable Player by the press.

"Apologies to Jubilo, but I'm happy" said Antlers coach Toninho Cerezo. "I have been involved in football for many years all over the world, and really today the level of both teams was remarkable. It was a great, thrilling match."

The Emperor's Cup Final was also decided by a golden goal, Brazilian Marcelo Baron scoring eight minutes into extra time to give Shimizu S-Pulse a 3-2 victory over Cerezo Osaka.

Cerezo had dramatically pulled back from 2-0 down, equalising in the final minute of normal time from the penalty spot.

Brazil-born Alex put Shimizu ahead after 20 minutes, with Ryuzo Morioka doubling the lead midway through the second half with a header. However, Hiroaki Morishima pulled one goal back with 10 minutes to play, and South Korean Yoon Jong-hwan converted the spot-kick at the death to take the game into extra-time.

Jubilo Iwata midfielder Toshiya Fujita was named the J.League's Player of the Year for 2001, while Consadole Sapporo's Brazilian striker Will was the only non-Antlers or Jubilo player to make it into the League Best XI. This was: Arno Van Zwam, Go Oiwa, Toshihiro Hattori, Takashi Fukunishi and Toshiya Fujita (all Jubilo), Yutaka Akita, Akira Narahashi, Mitsuo Ogasawara, Koji Nakata and Atsushi Yanagisawa (all Antlers), and Will.

There have been a number of coaching changes as clubs look ahead to the new season. The biggest surprise was Zdenko Verdenik's departure from JEF United Ichihara. The Slovakian, who turned the club from perennial strugglers into title contenders, was poached by Nagoya Grampus Eight.

Sanfrecce Hiroshima boss Valery Nepomnyashchiy also left after a very successful season, citing family reasons. Nepomnyashchiy, who led Cameroon at Italia 90, steered his side to a third-place finish in the Second Stage.

FC Tokyo released Kiyoshi Okuma, their coach since 1995. His replacement is former Urawa Reds boss Hiromi Hara. Dutchman Hans Ooft, the former Japanese national team coach, filled the void at Urawa, with ex-Sanfrecce and Celtic manager Wim Jansen coming in as his assistant.

Japan's finest...Toshiya Fujita

Another former Japan coach, France 98 incumbent Takeshi Okada, stepped down at Consadole Sapporo to be replaced by former national team defender Tetsuji Hashiratani. Gamba Osaka appointed ex-Kashiwa Reysol boss Akira Nishino, while relegated Avispa Fukuoka released Nestor Piccoli.

On the playing front, Tokyo Verdy 1969 have given a one-year contract extension to controversial Brazilian striker Edmundo.

Asia aims for five

ASIAN confederation general secretary Peter Velappan has re-opened the debate on World Cup Finals berths allocation by saying that Asia should receive five in 2006.

"We expect to have five Asian teams represented in Germany," said the Malaysian in a recent statement. "Asia would have the teams as well as the broad infrastructure in place to justify the claim."

Velappan's comments came a year ahead of the date by which FIFA is expected to make its decision known, and were a clear statement that Asia does not want a repeat of the perceived injustices of three years ago.

Then, following a FIFA executive committee meeting, Asia was granted just two places in addition to the two given to co-hosts Japan and Korea for this summer. AFC delegates walked out of FIFA's extraordinary congress in Los Angeles after a major row over the issue, though a potential boycott of the 2002 tournament was averted when UEFA offered Asia a play-off spot against one of its group runners-up – effectively an extra half place.

The AFC's hopes of five places for 2002 were dealt a huge blow when its three representatives at France 98 recorded only one win in 12 matches – Iran's defeat of the USA.

Should there be a repeat of that showing, FIFA may even reduce the number of spots the Asians receive, citing this year as an exception, given that the tournament has two berths for the hosts as opposed to the usual one.

That would upset the powerful Asian political bloc, which has already dealt FIFA president Sepp Blatter one major blow by voting together, for the first time, to hand the Germans the 2006 tournament.

Nevertheless, Velappan himself has suggested that Asia's four representatives this summer – South Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia and China – may not markedly improve their showing. He said: "They have all the talent as well as the determination, but the lack of international experience and exposure playing in top professional leagues will prove to be a handicap."

Michael Church

Dalian do the Double

DALIAN SHIDE'S domestic dominance was reconfirmed in December as the club collected a sixth League title in eight years as well as lifting the Chinese FA Cup for the first time.

Dalian clinched the championship for the second year in a row early in the month, finishing four points clear of Liaoning. Then a 3-1 aggregate win over Beijing Guoan gave Milorad Kosanovic's side their first League and Cup double.

Dalian were also named Team of the Year at the FA's annual awards, with Yugoslav Kosanovic voted Coach of the Year and Hao Haidong winning the Golden Boot. Twenty-year-old Zhou Jie won the Young Player of the Year award to complete a hat-trick of prizes for Dalian.

However, the top player accolade went to Li Tie of Liaoning for his outstanding performances for club and country. Li was at the centre of China's push towards their first World Cup finals appearance and was the only player to appear in all 26 League matches this season.

"I never expected this," he said. "I feel that there were better players in the League throughout the season, and I want to, first and foremost, thank Hao Haidong, for if he had not taken the Top Scorer award, I would have never had the chance to be Footballer of the Year.

"Players like Qi Hong, Hao Haidong, Sun Jihai and Li Xiaopeng have been exceptional this year. They are the best players in their positions at national level, and it's a shame there can be only one award, because they all deserve it."

Dalian, meanwhile, will be looking to extend their success to continental level after qualifying for the quarter-finals of the Asian Club Championship. They face defending champions Suwon Bluewings of South Korea, K-League champions Anyang Cheetahs and Kashima Antlers of Japan in the East Asia zone group in March. The top two sides advance to the semi-finals.

Michael Church

Outstanding...Li Tie earned China's top player award

Round-up

Coming home...Hong Myung-bo is going back to South Korea from Japan

Hong returns to Pohang

SOUTH KOREA defender Hong Myung-bo will return home next season to play for Pohang Steelers after a four-year stint in the J.League. Hong, who left Pohang to join Bellmare Hiratsuka in 1998 before signing for Kashiwa Reysol two seasons later, has signed a two-year deal with the club he led to the Asian Club Championship in 1997. The 32-year-old is Korea's most-capped player with 119 appearances and is likely to lead the side at the World Cup finals.

Former Asian champions Al Hilal moved to the top of the table in **SAUDI ARABIA** with a 4-0 win over Al Ta'i. This put them ahead of Al Ittihad and Al Sho'ola on goal difference.

The Asian Football Confederation has warned the **BANGLADESH** FA that it faces suspension by FIFA if it does not reinstate its elected committee. This was dissolved by the country's government.

The **MALAYSIAN** FA has decided to donate five per cent of the gate receipts from the first round of games in the top two divisions to the Afghanistan Refugees' Fund.

Former **KYRGYZSTAN** international Nematijaan Zakirov inspired SKA-PVO to the League and Cup double for the second season running. The club, based in the capital, Bishkek, finished nine points ahead of arch-rivals Jashtyk-Ak-Altyn in the League, then beat them 1-0 to win their fifth straight Cup Final.

Zhenis won the **KAZAKH** championship by nine points, with Atyrau the runners-up.

Adnan Hamad has been reappointed as national team coach of **IRAQ.** He replaces Croat Rudolf Belean, who had taken over from Hamad after two defeats in the second phase of World Cup qualifying.

THAILAND coach Peter Withe has agreed a one-year extension to his tenure. The Englishman took charge in October 1998.

Michael Church, Azam Mahmood & Vladimir Kalinkovich

Glory's run ended

Newcastle and Sharks put the bite on Perth

Take that...Sharks' Nick Carle celebrates scoring in the 3-1 defeat of Perth

PERTH GLORY'S 100 per cent record in this season's **AUSTRALIAN** National Soccer League ended when they could only draw 1-1 away to second-placed Newcastle United in their ninth game. Two weeks later, Olympic Sharks (formerly Sydney Olympic) inflicted the first defeat on the West Australians, winning 3-1 at home.

Glory hit back to beat third-placed Brisbane Strikers 4-2 at home in their next game. That result, combined with the fact that Newcastle were not playing that weekend, meant the Perth side went seven points clear at the top.

Newcastle were the only unbeaten side after 12 games and, like Glory, look certainties to finish in the top six and qualify for the play-offs.

South Melbourne, title winners in 1998 and 1999, were surprisingly propping up the table, a point adrift of Auckland Kingz, after losing 1-0 at Marconi Stallions.

COOK ISLANDS: Tupapa Panthers claimed the national Cup with an unexpectedly easy 5-1 victory over Avatiu in the Final.

Patrick Ropian opened the Panthers' account in the third minute, with Junior Puroko (penalty) and a superb solo goal from Ricardo Espinoza increasing their advantage to 3-0 by half-time.

Teiva Tauira gave Avatiu hope from a penalty on the hour, only for them to have two players sent off in the last 15 minutes. Panthers took advantage of their numerical superiority, Espinoza and Puroko (another penalty) scoring again to complete the rout.

NEW ZEALAND: The National League, which starts on February 2, will include the recently-formed Canterbury United, who have replaced underperforming Christchurch City as the standard-bearers for Christchurch.

Paul Moon

CROSSWORD

Mitre The authority..

Win a top-quality Mitre football

Mitre has kindly donated a top-quality football as first prize for this month's crossword. The first correct entry selected at random after February 22 will win the ball. Five runners-up will each win a *World Soccer Yearbook*.
SEND YOUR ENTRY TO: FEBRUARY CROSSWORD, *World Soccer*, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS.

ACROSS

7 Uganda's national coach (5)
8 Smuda's successor at Legia Warsaw (5)
9 Home of the Earthquakes, MLS champions (3,4)
10 Coach who led Uruguay's World Cup qualification bid (3)
11 Dutch club from Parkstad Limburg (4)
13 City in which Lobanovskyi's club side are based (4)
17 Cameroon midfielder who helped Lyon qualify for the Champions League (3)
18 Auxerre coach during Guy Roux's sabbatical (7)
20 Hero of 9 Across voted MLS Defender of the Year (5)
21 National side steered to the World Cup finals by Milutinovic (5)

DOWN

1 Moroccan offloaded to Lille from Deportivo La Coruna in 2001 (6)
2 Midfielder captaining Deportivo (4)
3 Promising defender making his mark at Steaua Bucharest (5)
4 Uruguayan midfielder with Spurs (5)
5 Liverpool midfielder first capped by England in November (6)
6 Ex-FC Tirol coach now at Hamburg (4)
12 French defender at Parma (6)
14 Australian defender with Rangers (6)
15 Freiburg defender picked up from Hamburg last year (5)
16 Monchengladbach's Czech midfielder, formerly with Slavia Prague (5)
17 Highly-regarded young French forward starring for Sochaux (4)
19 Turkish attacker who tried his luck in Spain at Real Sociedad (4)

DECEMBER SOLUTION

Across: 1 Bologna, 7 Youla, 8 Saifi, 9 McAteer, 10 Deschamps, 15 Eusebio, 18 Magno, 19 Neaga, 20 Linares.
Down: 1 Basma, 2 Laigle, 3 Grim, 4 Aybaba, 5 June, 6 Favre, 11 Cabral, 12 Prager, 13 Cerny, 14 Gross, 16 Stam, 17 Oman.

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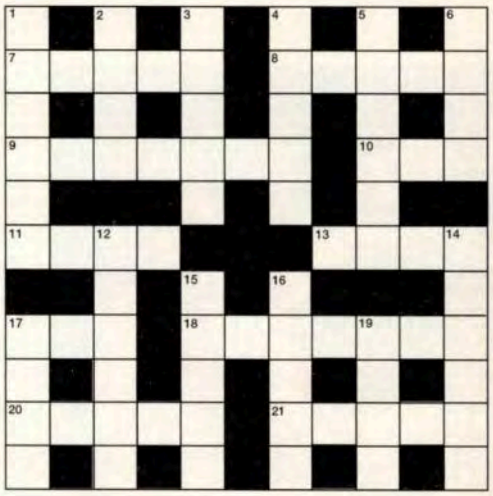

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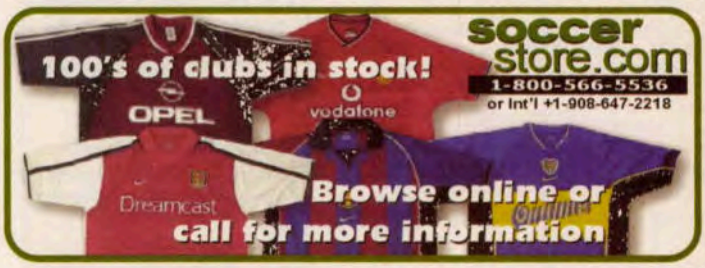

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WORLD SOCCER

Brian Glanville's LAST WORD

'Was there a fifth assailant, who was never identified and brought to justice?'

Woodgate (left) was convicted of affray and sentenced to 100 hours' community service over an assault on a student. Bowyer was cleared

Bowyer-Woodgate: where is the fifth man?

IT AMAZES me that no one has yet drawn the obvious conclusion from the shameful and repugnant affair of Sarfraz Najeib and the cruel beating he received that night in Leeds. That's to say, that all but the vicious bite on the student's cheek, of which the scar remains, was self-inflicted.

The only alternative deduction, it seems to me, is that there was a fifth assailant who was never identified and brought to justice.

Look at the facts and the verdicts. One brute from Middlesbrough, Paul Clifford, goes to jail for a swingeing six years, and serve him right, you could well say. No one else is jailed at all.

Not Leeds United defender Jonathan Woodgate nor another of his Middlesbrough friends, Neale Caveney; they were found guilty merely of affray, and tapped lightly on the wrist; sentenced to a mere 100 hours of community service. Woodgate's team-mate, Lee Bowyer, though hardly perhaps as pure as the driven snow, was acquitted, if not entirely vindicated, since the judge accused him of having seriously lied during his previous interrogations by the police.

The law itself, let alone the law of libel, compels us to accept the validity of all these verdicts; yet the mystery remains. Could just one thug have inflicted such a horrifying catalogue of wounds? What is the precise meaning of affray?

Whether or not the attack was 'racist' seems to me a secondary matter. Both judges, in the two trials, the first of which was aborted after that ill-judged article in the *Sunday Mirror*, opined that there was no racial motivation. Yet the senior detective in charge of the investigations had publicly asserted that there was.

Who can say for sure? Perhaps the original assault on poor Najeib was of racist origin, insults to a 'Paki' having allegedly been uttered.

Yet does it, in the last analysis, matter? What surely did matter was a cowardly and brutal assault on a defenceless victim, whether he be white, black or brown.

Najeib's family, quite understandably, have reportedly decided to bring civil actions against Bowyer and Woodgate. Less explicable is their decision to sue Leeds United themselves. What possible grounds can there be for this? How can the club in any way be held responsible for the behaviour of any of their players, away from the location or jurisdiction of Elland Road, the training ground or the environs of either?

Manager David O'Leary himself has been trenchantly criticised, first for apparent ambiguity, secondly for allowing his autobiography to be serialised hard on the heels of the court's sentencing. It has been pointed out that while he has strongly condemned the behaviour of Bowyer and Woodgate, he continued to pick them – especially Bowyer – up to and including the second trial.

Yes, there is an implicit ambiguity in O'Leary's position, not least when he criticises the FA for refusing to choose either player

for England during that same period. But in strictly legal terms – until the European Union inflicts its distorted laws upon us in a bleak future – a person in Britain is innocent until they are proved guilty.

Take the analogy of David Jones. When Southampton manager, he was obliged to wait through an unconscionable hiatus before at long last the case of allegedly molesting boys in a home in Liverpool was brought against him, ending, as one had hoped and believed it would, in total absolution. During that time his club initially stood by him, keeping him in office, only and eventually deplorably to stand him down and put Glenn Hoddle in his place.

One of the most alarming features of the Bowyer and Woodgate case was surely the reports of the colossal amounts of alcohol the players and their friends imbibed: five whole pints of potent cocktail, followed by beers. I've written before of the drinking culture that has for generations been prevalent in English football, but it seems astonishing to me that talented young footballers could thus undermine their future. Lord only knows what damage has already been done to their livers.

And now, Bowyer for England, even Woodgate for England? You can look at such a question legally or morally. Whatever one may think about Bowyer and his behaviour – which includes an assault on the Asian staff of a McDonald's restaurant and a consequent fine of £4,500 – the fact remains that he was acquitted in the Najeib case; even if his alleged lies cost him £1million. Legally, at least, he is in the clear.

Then came the bolt from the blue: Bowyer refused to pay the fine imposed on him by Leeds for breaking their code of conduct on the night Najeib was attacked and, as a result, was transfer-listed. The club set the fine because, they said, Bowyer should not have been "under undue influence of alcohol" on the evening concerned.

It's the principle of the thing I suppose; if such things concerned Bowyer. After all, what are four weeks' wages when you have £1million in costs to pay? Here, however, Leeds have surely behaved as they should.

As it turned out, Bowyer is paying so Bowyer is staying. What a surprise.

But were Najeib's injuries really self-inflicted? And has one brute, because of that bite, become the scapegoat? Where is the Fifth Man?

Charlton pioneer...Jimmy Seed

Charlton's success sprouted from Seed

A BLACK mark to the ITV commentator who recently and carelessly described Alan Curbishley as Charlton Athletic's longest-serving manager. Curbishley took joint charge of Charlton with Steve Gritt in 1991. Jimmy Seed managed the club between 1933 and 1956 and, though possibly not observed by our commentator, despite the massive lettering, has a stand named after him.

Seed was the true architect of the club's remarkable success, not least in pre-war years when they soared in successive seasons from the Third Division South to high ranking in the First.

Seed was a famous inside-right in his day, a Wearsider who fought in the First World War. He subsequently became a star with Tottenham, with whom he won an FA Cup-winners medal in 1921, and Sheffield Wednesday. He also played five times for England.

Spare us the Heffer treatment

INEVITABLY, perhaps, recent louche events involving British and Britain-based footballers have provoked the usual root-and-branch condemnation of the game itself as the source of all evil. *Daily Mail* columnist Simon Heffer has been particularly guilty.

He is often cogent and incisive on political matters, though an occasional silliness can extend to such subjects as the deeply self-destructive binge-drinking by Oxford students, girls especially. They are far less culpable, it appears, than mere footballers who indulge in the same behaviour. This despite the fact that senior medics have recently deplored the trend and the danger to the health of those who drink to excess.

What Heffer, and his like, should be bright enough to realise is that football, in the words of Denry Machin, the hero of Arnold Bennett's *The Card*, "has to do with everything". Thus it will intimately and accurately reflect the realities of the society in which it is played.

Our own quite clearly has been in a state of degeneration; nastier and nastier, more and more violent, increasingly greedy. Heffer is surely smart enough to make the connection, though I'd be the first to concede that hooliganism among fans is as rampant as ever, even if it's under control in the stadiums.

The luckless proprietors of the pub in London's Waterloo smashed up recently by Millwall fans in search of their Portsmouth equivalents before an evening game could give forbidding testimony. And I hope this doesn't provoke the usual eruption of well-written, wrong-headed, ill-informed complaints by certain Millwall fans, who never seem aware of what's happening. None so blind as those who will not see.

All, though, is not lost; not when there are dazzling young English footballers of impeccable behaviour such as Michael Owen of Liverpool and Joe Cole of West Ham.

Owen has already established himself as one of the world's most dynamic and gifted strikers. Cole, whom I've so long admired, had the chance in a recent West Ham-Arsenal derby to show how important his skills could be to an England midfield which so badly needs them.

Both young men are models of propriety, indeed role models, if you want to employ that limp cliche.

Role model...Joe Cole

Though why a footballer should be expected to be any kind of a role model any more than some dissolute rock singer has always been mysterious to me.

These are family-oriented, disciplined, decent young men. They don't deserve to be Heffered.

February 1991

TOMAS BROLIN graced the cover 11 years ago, wearing the shirt of Parma, where he had moved after the World Cup of the previous summer.

The Swede, dubbed 'The Last Viking' by the Italians, had scored a glorious goal against Brazil in Turin at Italia 90, and the fact that he had then moved on to an Italian club reminded correspondent Pentti Hietanen of a similar journey made by Lennart Skoglund, to Inter after the 1958 finals.

No other Swedish footballer apart from Skoglund had enjoyed such a rapid rise to stardom as Brolin; after all, just a couple of years before he had been turning out for modest Swedish side Sundsvall while also pursuing his other career as an accountant.

Marco Van Basten's career had also flourished since Italia 90. He had just been made captain of Holland, an appointment that led Simon Kuper to say: "Van Basten has become a different man over the past few months. The youth who sulked through the World Cup because his mentor, Johan Cruyff, had not been asked to manage Holland now takes responsibility for the team's strategy and encourages his lesser team-mates."

The Dutchman had been a grave disappointment at Italia 90, but one of its stars, Paul Gascoigne, was also facing problems, ironically because of the success he enjoyed. Brian Glanville was there to warn of the pitfalls. "The danger is to demand treatment for Gascoigne – whether the demand be made by himself or others – which seems to equate him with some Hollywood star. He is a professional footballer, not Elizabeth Taylor or Robert Redford."

Gascoigne's England had narrowly defeated Cameroon in the quarter-finals at Italia 90, and, it was reported, the Indomitable Lions' achievement in reaching the last eight had just earned Africa an extra place at the next finals.

But there was plenty of bad news from that continent, too. Forty fans had been killed in a stampede caused by fighting between rival supporters during a Kaizer Chiefs-Orlando Pirates 'friendly' in South Africa.

Meanwhile, Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda was reduced to tears after witnessing fans attacking a player during the African Champions Cup Final between Zambia's Nkana Red Devils and Algeria's JS Kabylie.

Elsewhere in the issue, Eric Batty was concentrating on the problems afflicting the way soccer was being played at international level. "Modern football is still waiting for a team to lead the way out of the defensive morass into which the game has fallen," he wrote. Batty concluded with a damning appraisal of the current situation: "Truly international teams of skill and talent: None."

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